JIDAIGEKI COMIC SERIES
時代劇画

柳生連也武芸帖

YAGYURENYA BUGEICHO

時代劇シリーズ
HISTORY OF JAPAN
COMIC
SPECIAL SELECTION

とみ新蔵

3

SPコミックス

柳生連也武芸帖

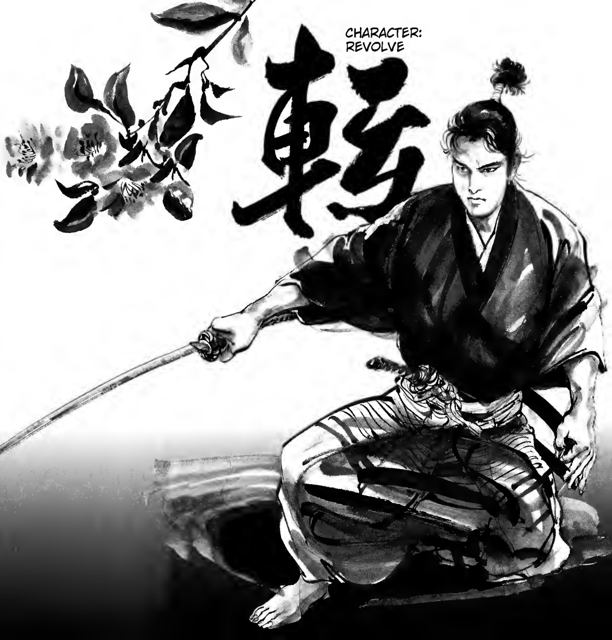
YAGYU RENYA,
LEGEND OF THE
SWORD MASTER

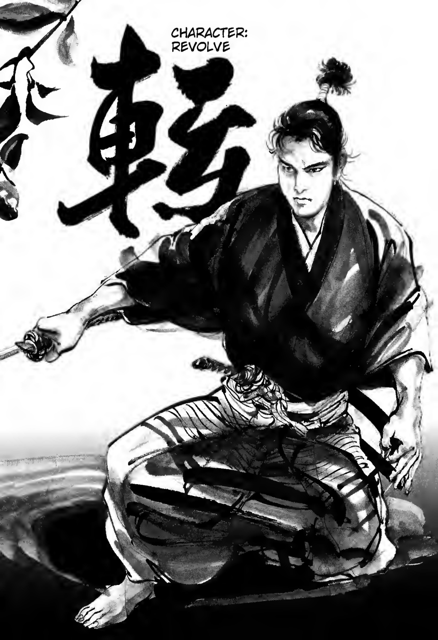
とみ新蔵

SHINZOU
TOMI

3

THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "REVOLVING SPIRIT" IS A FLEXIBLE STATE OF MIND AND A TECHNIQUE OF IMMEDIATELY CHANGING IN RESPONSE TO (ADAPTING TO) ANY OPPONENT POSSIBLE. IT ALSO INDICATES THE GREAT FORCE OF A ROUND ROCK TUMBLING (REVOLVING) DOWN A HIGH MOUNTAIN.




CHARACTER:
REVOLVE
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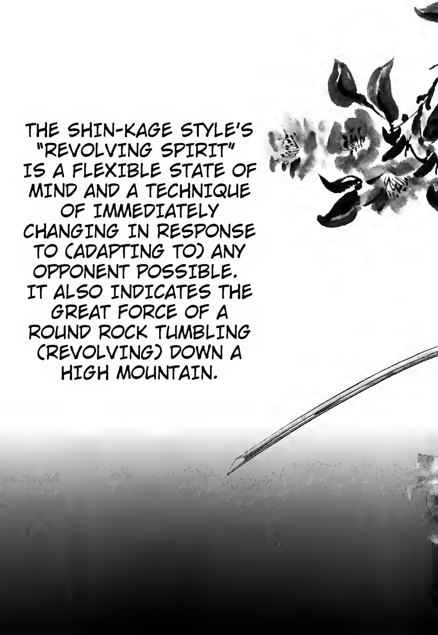

THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "REVOLVING SPIRIT" IS A FLEXIBLE STATE OF MIND AND A TECHNIQUE OF IMMEDIATELY CHANGING IN RESPONSE TO (ADAPTING TO) ANY OPPONENT POSSIBLE. IT ALSO INDICATES THE GREAT FORCE OF A ROUND ROCK TUMBLING (REVOLVING) DOWN A HIGH MOUNTAIN.

YAGYU RENYA
LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

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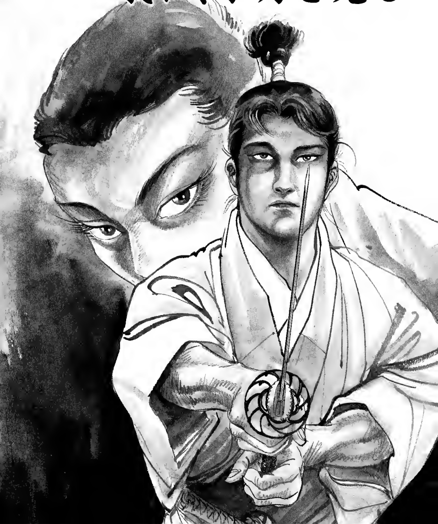
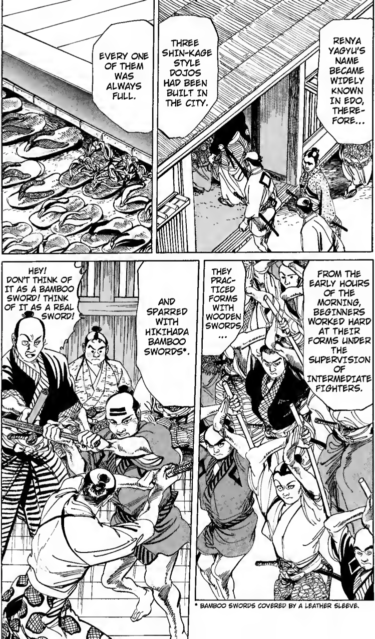
PUBLISHED IN COMIC RAN

CHAPTER 14: GISEN, LOOKING AT THE MOON ON THE WATER

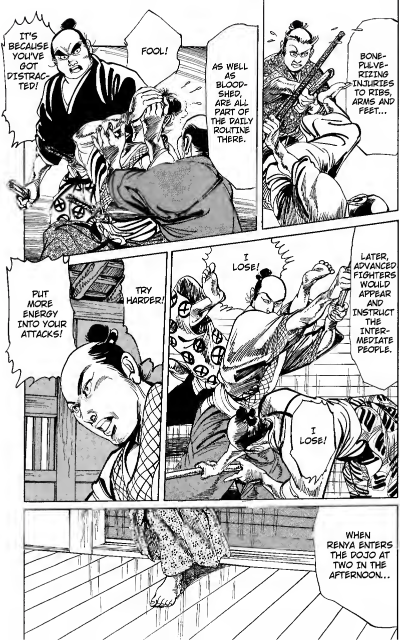
[第十四話]

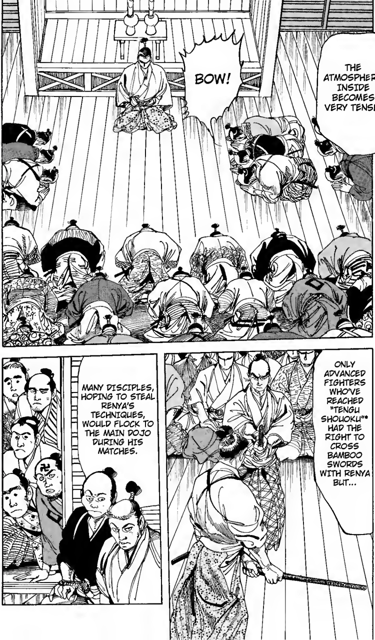
ぎ せん すい げつ
義仙、水月を見る




RENYA YAGYU'S NAME BECAME WIDELY KNOWN IN EDO, THEREFORE...
THREE SHIN-KAGE STYLE DOJOS HAD BEEN BUILT IN THE CITY.
EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS ALWAYS FULL.
FROM THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING, BEGINNERS WORKED HARD AT THEIR FORMS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF INTERMEDIATE FIGHTERS.
THEY PRACTICED FORMS WITH WOODEN SWORDS...
AND SPARRED WITH HIKIHADA BAMBOO SWORDS*.
HEY! DON'T THINK OF IT AS A BAMBOO SWORD! THINK OF IT AS A REAL SWORD!

* BAMBOO SWORDS COVERED BY A LEATHER SLEEVE.


BONE-PULVERIZING INJURIES TO RIBS, ARMS AND FEET...
AS WELL AS BLOODSHED, ARE ALL PART OF THE DAILY ROUTINE THERE.
FOOL!
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT DISTRACTED!
LATER, ADVANCED FIGHTERS WOULD APPEAR AND INSTRUCT THE INTERMEDIATE PEOPLE.
I LOSE!
I LOSE!
TRY HARDER!
PUT MORE ENERGY INTO YOUR ATTACKS!
WHEN RENYA ENTERS THE DOJO AT TWO IN THE AFTERNOON...


THE ATMOSPHERE INSIDE BECOMES VERY TENSE.
BOW!
ONLY ADVANCED FIGHTERS WHO'VE REACHED "TENGU SHOUOKU"* HAD THE RIGHT TO CROSS BAMBOO SWORDS WITH RENYA BUT...
MANY DISCIPLES, HOPING TO STEAL RENYA'S TECHNIQUES, WOULD FLOCK TO THE MAIN DOJO DURING HIS MATCHES.

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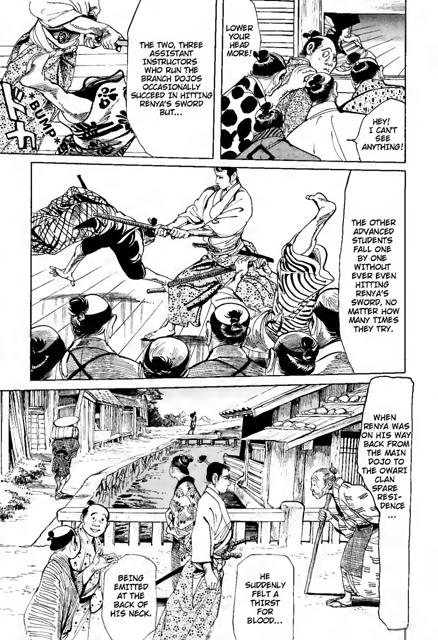
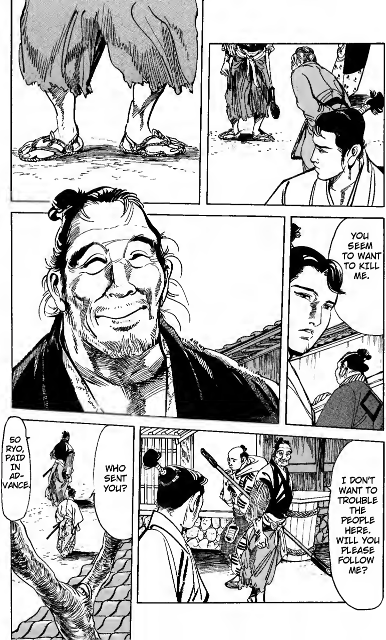
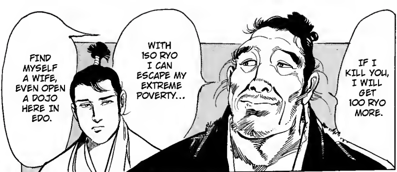
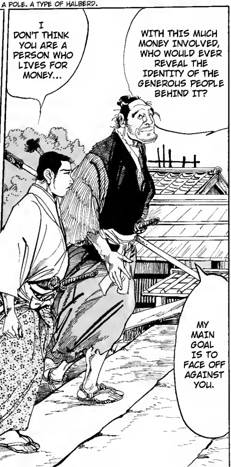
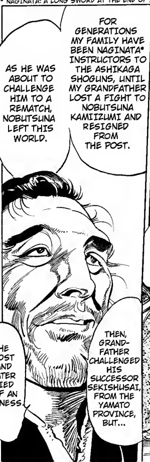
* A HIGH RANK IN THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE.


LOWER YOUR HEAD MORE!
HEY! I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING!
THE TWO, THREE ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS WHO RUN THE BRANCH DOJOS OCCASIONALLY SUCCEED IN HITTING RENYA'S SWORD BUT...
BUMP
THE OTHER ADVANCED STUDENTS FALL ONE BY ONE WITHOUT EVER EVEN HITTING RENYA'S SWORD, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES THEY TRY.
WHEN RENYA WAS ON HIS WAY BACK FROM THE MAIN DOJO TO THE OWARI CLAN SPARE RESIDENCE...
HE SUDDENLY FELT A THIRST FOR BLOOD...
BEING EMITTED AT THE BACK OF HIS NECK.


YOU SEEM TO WANT TO KILL ME.
I DON'T WANT TO TROUBLE THE PEOPLE HERE. WILL YOU PLEASE FOLLOW ME?
WHO SENT YOU?
50 RYO, PAID IN ADVANCE.


IF I KILL YOU, I WILL GET 100 RYO MORE.
WITH 150 RYO I CAN ESCAPE MY EXTREME POVERTY...
FIND MYSELF A WIFE, EVEN OPEN A DOJO HERE IN EDO.


WITH THIS MUCH MONEY INVOLVED, WHO WOULD EVER REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF THE GENEROUS PEOPLE BEHIND IT?
I DON'T THINK YOU ARE A PERSON WHO LIVES FOR MONEY...
MY MAIN GOAL IS TO FACE OFF AGAINST YOU.


FOR GENERATIONS MY FAMILY HAVE BEEN NAGINATA* INSTRUCTORS TO THE ASHIKAGA SHOGUNS, UNTIL MY GRANDFATHER LOST A FIGHT TO NOBUTSUNA KAMIIZUMI AND RESIGNED FROM THE POST.
AS HE WAS ABOUT TO CHALLENGE HIM TO A REMATCH, NOBUTSUNA LEFT THIS WORLD.
THEN, GRANDFATHER CHALLENGED HIS SUCCESSOR SEKISHUSAI, FROM THE YAMATO PROVINCE, BUT...
HE LOST AND LATER DIED OF AN ILLNESS.

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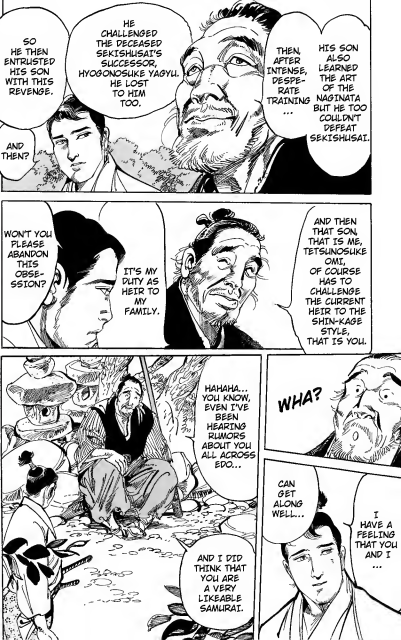
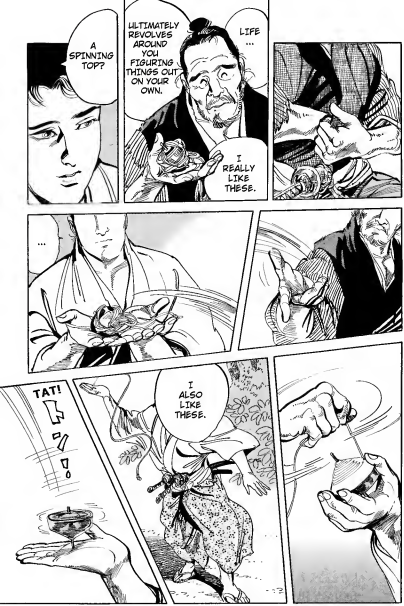
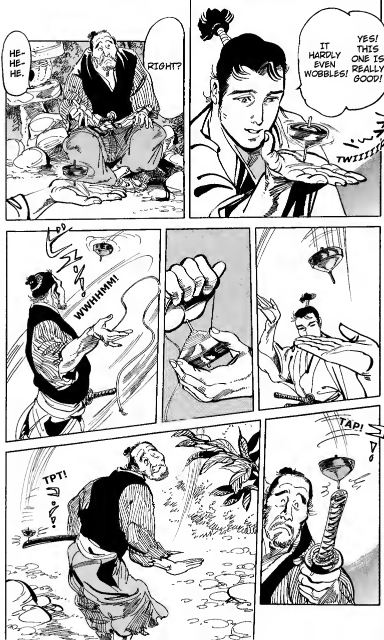
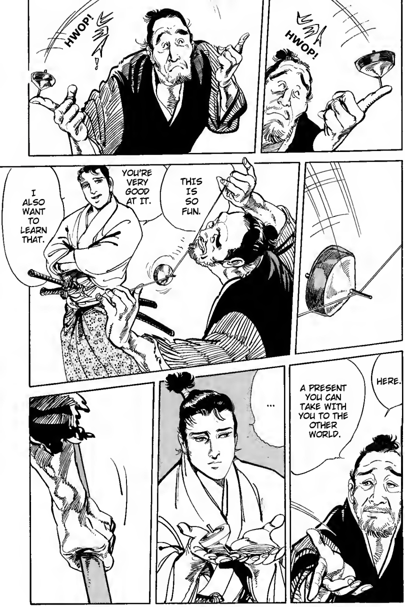
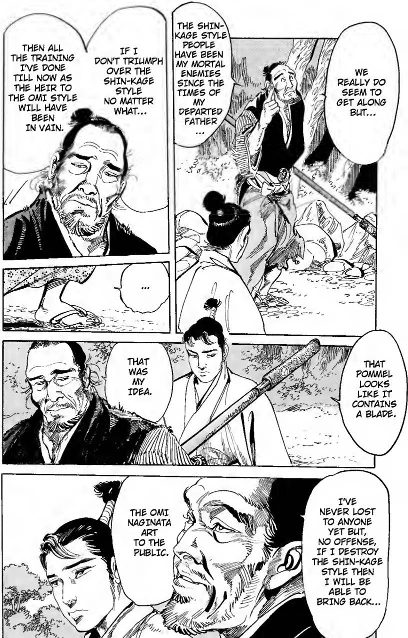
* NAGINATA: A LONG SWORD AT THE END OF A POLE. A TYPE OF HALBERD.

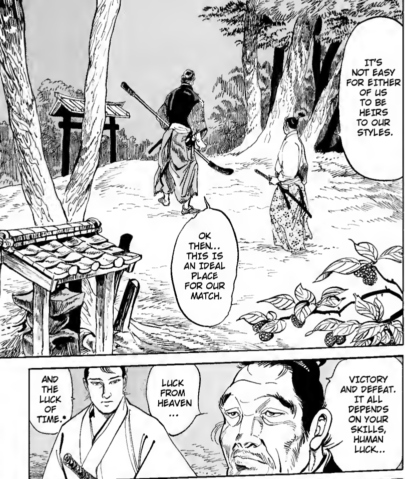

HIS SON ALSO LEARNED THE ART OF THE NAGINATA BUT HE TOO COULDN'T DEFEAT SEKISHUSAI.
THEN, AFTER INTENSE, DESPERATE TRAINING ...
HE CHALLENGED THE DECEASED SEKISHUSAI'S SUCCESSOR, HYOGONOSUKE YAGYU. HE LOST TO HIM TOO.
SO HE THEN ENTRUSTED HIS SON WITH THIS REVENGE.
AND THEN?
AND THEN THAT SON, THAT IS ME, TETSUNOSUKE OMI, OF COURSE HAS TO CHALLENGE THE CURRENT HEIR TO THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE, THAT IS YOU.
WON'T YOU PLEASE ABANDON THIS OBSESSION?
IT'S MY DUTY AS HEIR TO MY FAMILY.
HAHAHA... YOU KNOW, EVEN I'VE BEEN HEARING RUMORS ABOUT YOU ALL ACROSS EDO...
AND I DID THINK THAT YOU ARE A VERY LIKEABLE SAMURAI.
WHA?
I HAVE A FEELING THAT YOU AND I ...
CAN GET ALONG WELL...


LIFE ...
ULTIMATELY REVOLVES AROUND YOU FIGURING THINGS OUT ON YOUR OWN.
I REALLY LIKE THESE.
A SPINNING TOP?
...
I ALSO LIKE THESE.
TAT!

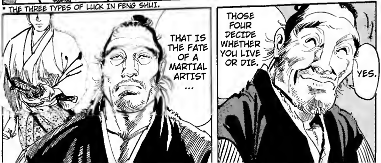

YES! THIS ONE IS REALLY GOOD!
IT HARDLY EVEN WOBBLES!
TWIIIIIRLLLL
RIGHT?
HE-HE-HE.
WWHHMM!
TAP!
TPT!

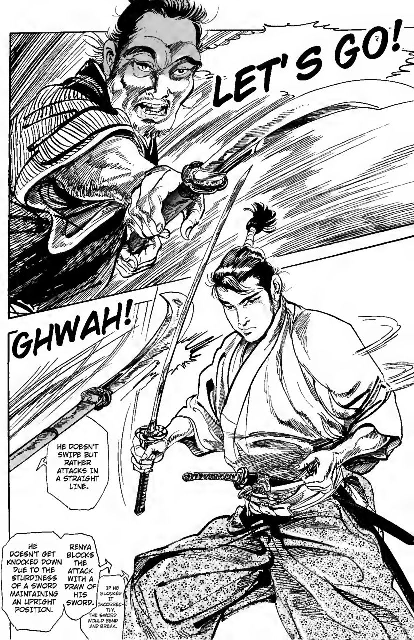

ヒュイ
HWOP!
HWOP!
ヒュイ!
THIS IS SO FUN.
YOU'RE VERY GOOD AT IT.
I ALSO WANT TO LEARN THAT.
HERE.
A PRESENT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO THE OTHER WORLD.
...

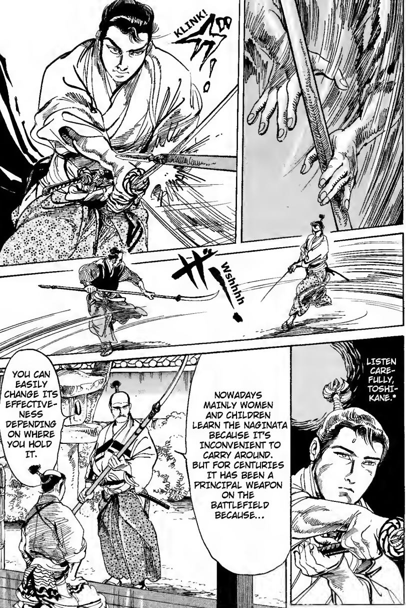

WE REALLY DO SEEM TO GET ALONG BUT...
THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MY MORTAL ENEMIES SINCE THE TIMES OF MY DEPARTED FATHER...
IF I DON'T TRIUMPH OVER THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE NO MATTER WHAT...
THEN ALL THE TRAINING I'VE DONE TILL NOW AS THE HEIR TO THE OMI STYLE WILL HAVE BEEN IN VAIN.
...
THAT POMMEL LOOKS LIKE IT CONTAINS A BLADE.
THAT WAS MY IDEA.
I'VE NEVER LOST TO ANYONE YET BUT, NO OFFENSE, IF I DESTROY THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE THEN I WILL BE ABLE TO BRING BACK...
THE OMI NAGINATA ART TO THE PUBLIC.


IT'S NOT EASY FOR EITHER OF US TO BE HEIRS TO OUR STYLES.
OK THEN... THIS IS AN IDEAL PLACE FOR OUR MATCH.
VICTORY AND DEFEAT. IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOUR SKILLS, HUMAN LUCK...
LUCK FROM HEAVEN ...
AND THE LUCK OF TIME.*

* THE THREE TYPES OF LUCK IN FENG SHUI.

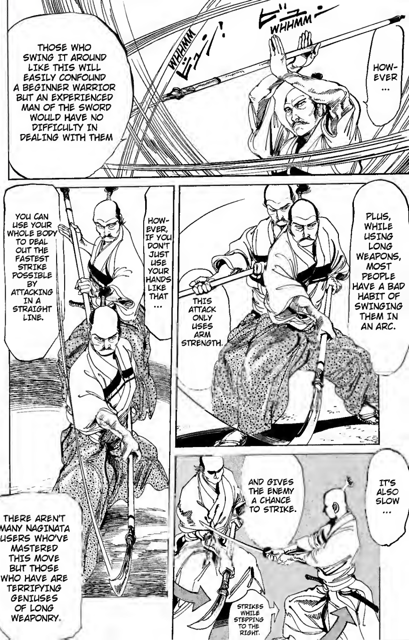

THOSE FOUR DECIDE WHETHER YOU LIVE OR DIE.
YES.
THAT IS THE FATE OF A MARTIAL ARTIST ...

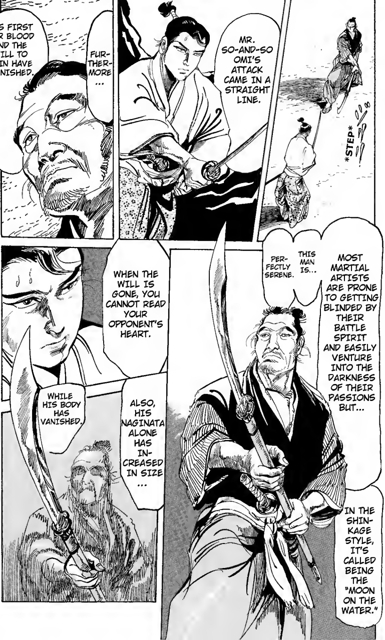

LET'S GO!
GHWAH!
HE DOESN'T SWIPE BUT RATHER ATTACKS IN A STRAIGHT LINE.
HE DOESN'T GET KNOCKED DOWN DUE TO THE STURDINESS OF A SWORD MAINTAINING AN UPRIGHT POSITION.
RENYA BLOCKS THE ATTACK WITH A DRAW OF HIS SWORD.
IF HE BLOCKED IT INCORRECTLY, THE SWORD WOULD BEND AND BREAK.

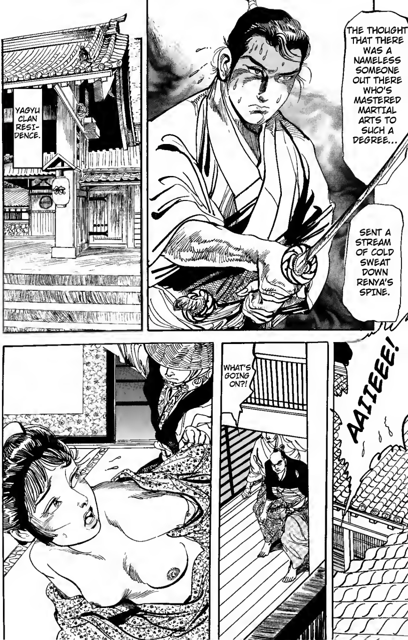

KLINK!
ザ
Wshhhh
LISTEN CAREFULLY, TOSHIKANE.*
NOWADAYS MAINLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN LEARN THE NAGINATA BECAUSE IT'S INCONVENIENT TO CARRY AROUND. BUT FOR CENTURIES IT HAS BEEN A PRINCIPAL WEAPON ON THE BATTLEFIELD BECAUSE...
YOU CAN EASILY CHANGE ITS EFFECTIVENESS DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU HOLD IT.

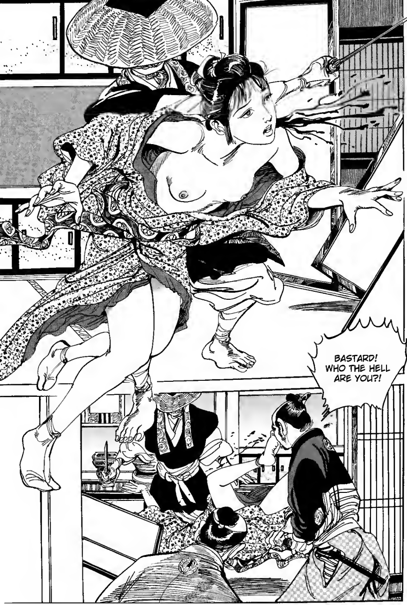
---

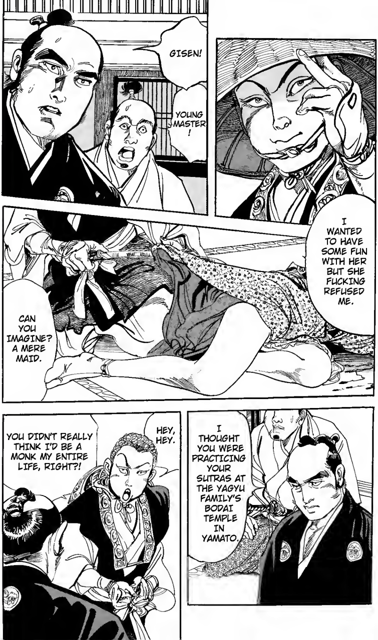
* LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI.

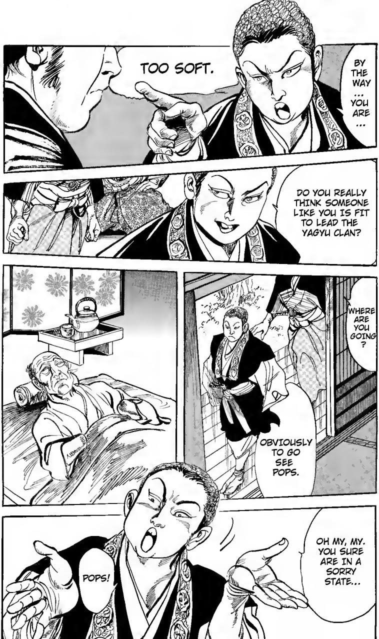

ビュ WHHMM
HOW-EVER ...
ビュン WHHMM
THOSE WHO SWING IT AROUND LIKE THIS WILL EASILY CONFOUND A BEGINNER WARRIOR BUT AN EXPERIENCED MAN OF THE SWORD WOULD HAVE NO DIFFICULTY IN DEALING WITH THEM
PLUS, WHILE USING LONG WEAPONS, MOST PEOPLE HAVE A BAD HABIT OF SWINGING THEM IN AN ARC.
THIS ATTACK ONLY USES ARM STRENGTH.
HOW-EVER, IF YOU DON'T JUST USE YOUR HANDS LIKE THAT ...
YOU CAN USE YOUR WHOLE BODY TO DEAL OUT THE FASTEST STRIKE POSSIBLE BY ATTACKING IN A STRAIGHT LINE.
IT'S ALSO SLOW ...
AND GIVES THE ENEMY A CHANCE TO STRIKE.
STRIKES WHILE STEPPING TO THE RIGHT.
THERE AREN'T MANY NAGINATA USERS WHO'VE MASTERED THIS MOVE BUT THOSE WHO HAVE ARE TERRIFYING GENIUSES OF LONG WEAPONRY.

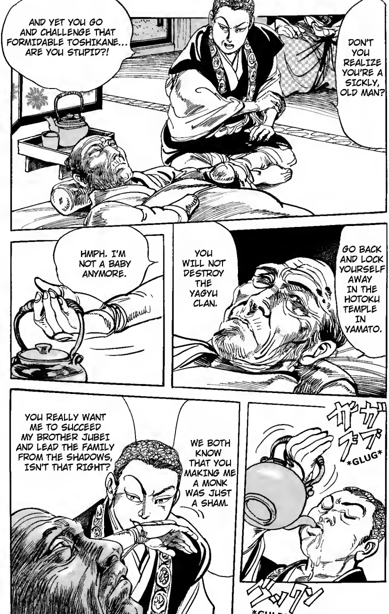

STEP
MR. SO-AND-SO OMI'S ATTACK CAME IN A STRAIGHT LINE.
FURTHERMORE...
HIS FIRST FOR BLOOD AND THE WILL TO WIN HAVE VANISHED.
MOST MARTIAL ARTISTS ARE PRONE TO GETTING BLINDED BY THEIR BATTLE SPIRIT AND EASILY VENTURE INTO THE DARKNESS OF THEIR PASSIONS BUT...
THIS MAN IS...
PERFECTLY SERENE.
IN THE SHINKAGE STYLE, IT'S CALLED BEING THE "MOON ON THE WATER."
WHEN THE WILL IS GONE, YOU CANNOT READ YOUR OPPONENT'S HEART.
ALSO, HIS NAGINATA ALONE HAS INCREASED IN SIZE...
WHILE HIS BODY HAS VANISHED.

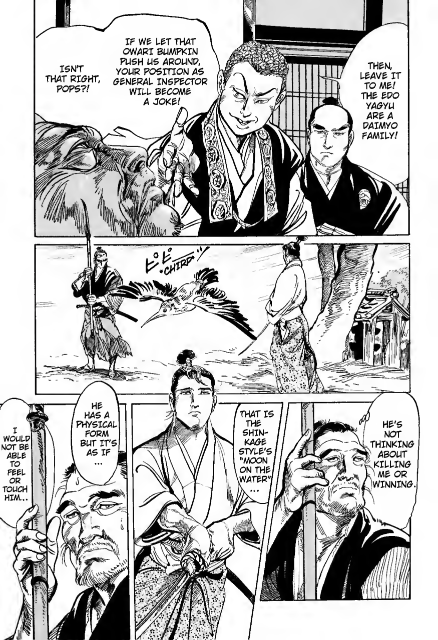

THE THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS A NAMELESS SOMEONE OUT THERE WHO'S MASTERED MARTIAL ARTS TO SUCH A DEGREE...
SENT A STREAM OF COLD SWEAT DOWN RENYA'S SPINE.
YAGYU CLAN RESIDENCE.
AAIIEEE!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!

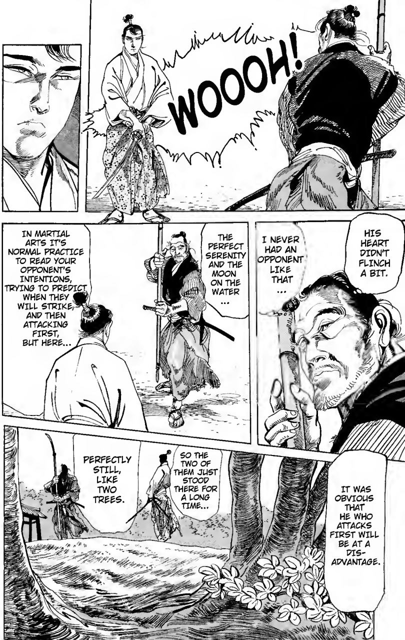

BASTARD! WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!

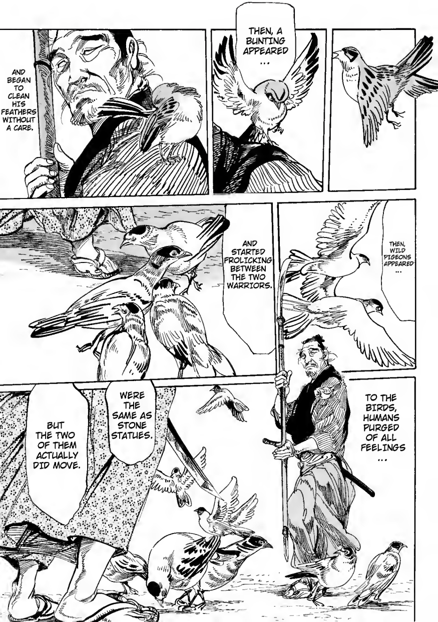

GISEN!
YOUNG MASTER!
I WANTED TO HAVE SOME FUN WITH HER BUT SHE FUCKING REFUSED ME.
CAN YOU IMAGINE? A MERE MAID.
HEY, HEY.
YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I'D BE A MONK MY ENTIRE LIFE, RIGHT?!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE PRACTICING YOUR SUTRAS AT THE YAGYU FAMILY'S BODAI TEMPLE IN YAMATO.

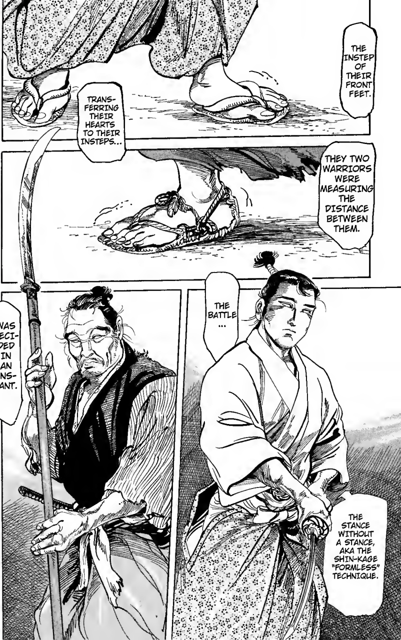

BY THE WAY ... YOU ARE ...
TOO SOFT.
DO YOU REALLY THINK SOMEONE LIKE YOU IS FIT TO LEAD THE YAGYU CLAN?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING ?
OBVIOUSLY TO GO SEE POPS.
OH MY, MY. YOU SURE ARE IN A SORRY STATE...
POPS!

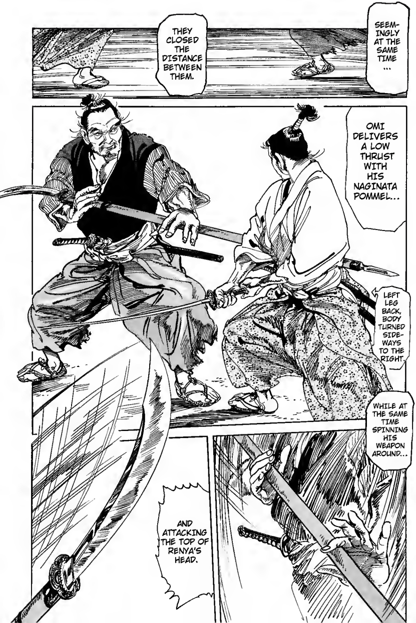

DON'T YOU REALIZE YOU'RE A SICKLY, OLD MAN?
AND YET YOU GO AND CHALLENGE THAT FORMIDABLE TOSHIKANE... ARE YOU STUPID?!
GO BACK AND LOCK YOURSELF AWAY IN THE HOTOKU TEMPLE IN YAMATO.
YOU WILL NOT DESTROY THE YAGYU CLAN.
HMPH. I'M NOT A BABY ANYMORE.
ガブガブ
GLUG
WE BOTH KNOW THAT YOU MAKING ME A MONK WAS JUST A SHAM.
YOU REALLY WANT ME TO SUCCEED MY BROTHER JUBEI AND LEAD THE FAMILY FROM THE SHADOWS, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
ゴックン
GULP

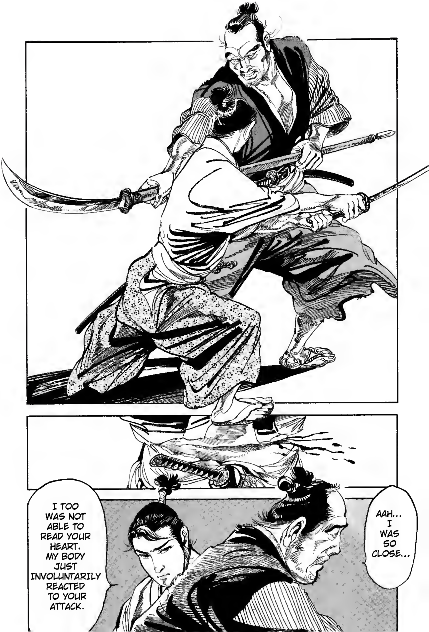

IF WE LET THAT OWARI BUMPKIN PUSH US AROUND, YOUR POSITION AS GENERAL INSPECTOR WILL BECOME A JOKE!
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, POPS?!
THEN, LEAVE IT TO ME! THE EDO YAGYU ARE A DAIMYO FAMILY!
ピピ *CHIRP*
HE'S NOT THINKING ABOUT KILLING ME OR WINNING.
THAT IS THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "MOON ON THE WATER"...
HE HAS A PHYSICAL FORM BUT IT'S AS IF ...
I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FEEL OR TOUCH HIM...

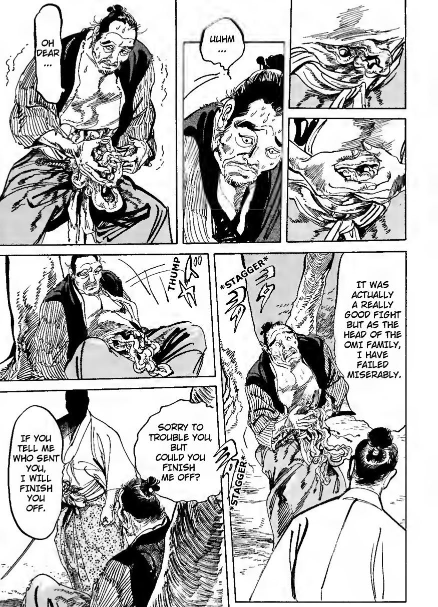

WOOOH!
IN MARTIAL ARTS IT'S NORMAL PRACTICE TO READ YOUR OPPONENT'S INTENTIONS, TRYING TO PREDICT WHEN THEY WILL STRIKE, AND THEN ATTACKING FIRST, BUT HERE...
THE PERFECT SERENITY AND THE MOON ON THE WATER ...
I NEVER HAD AN OPPONENT LIKE THAT ...
HIS HEART DIDN'T FLINCH A BIT.
PERFECTLY STILL, LIKE TWO TREES.
SO THE TWO OF THEM JUST STOOD THERE FOR A LONG TIME...
IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WHO ATTACKS FIRST WILL BE AT A DIS-ADVANTAGE.

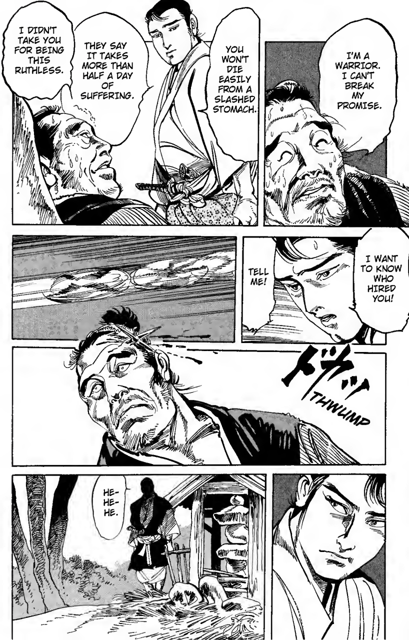

THEN, A BUNTING APPEARED ...
AND BEGAN TO CLEAN HIS FEATHERS WITHOUT A CARE.
THEN, WILD PIGEONS APPEARED ...
AND STARTED FROLICKING BETWEEN THE TWO WARRIORS.
TO THE BIRDS, HUMANS PURGED OF ALL FEELINGS ...
WERE THE SAME AS STONE STATUES.
BUT THE TWO OF THEM ACTUALLY DID MOVE.

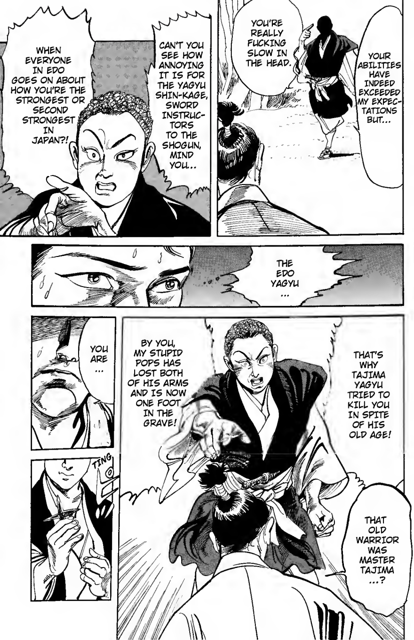

THE INSTEP OF THEIR FRONT FEET.
TRANSFERRING THEIR HEARTS TO THEIR INSTEPS...
THEY TWO WARRIORS WERE MEASURING THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM.
THE BATTLE...
WAS DECIDED IN AN INSTANT.
THE STANCE WITHOUT A STANCE, AKA THE SHIN-KAGE "FORMLESS" TECHNIQUE.

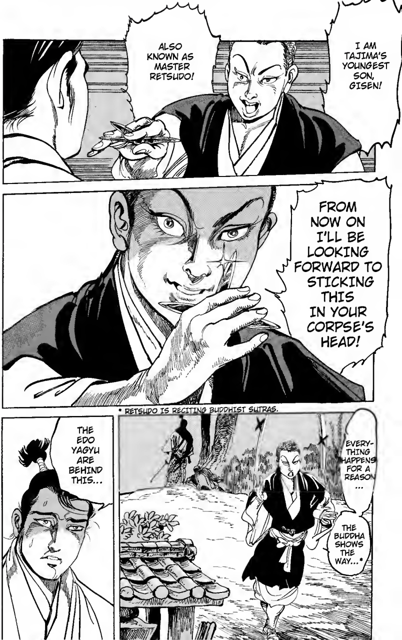

SEEMINGLY AT THE SAME TIME ...
THEY CLOSED THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM.
OMI DELIVERS A LOW THRUST WITH HIS NAGINATA POMMEL...
LEFT LEG BACK, BODY TURNED SIDEWAYS TO THE RIGHT.
WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SPINNING HIS WEAPON AROUND...
AND ATTACKING THE TOP OF RENYA'S HEAD.


AAH... I WAS SO CLOSE...
I TOO WAS NOT ABLE TO READ YOUR HEART. MY BODY JUST INVOLUNTARILY REACTED TO YOUR ATTACK.

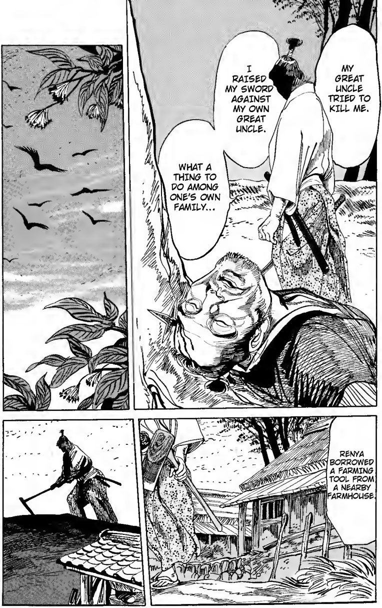

UUHM ...
OH DEAR ...
STAGGER
IT WAS ACTUALLY A REALLY GOOD FIGHT BUT AS THE HEAD OF THE OMI FAMILY, I HAVE FAILED MISERABLY.
STAGGER
THUMP
SORRY TO TROUBLE YOU, BUT COULD YOU FINISH ME OFF?
IF YOU TELL ME WHO SENT YOU, I WILL FINISH YOU OFF.

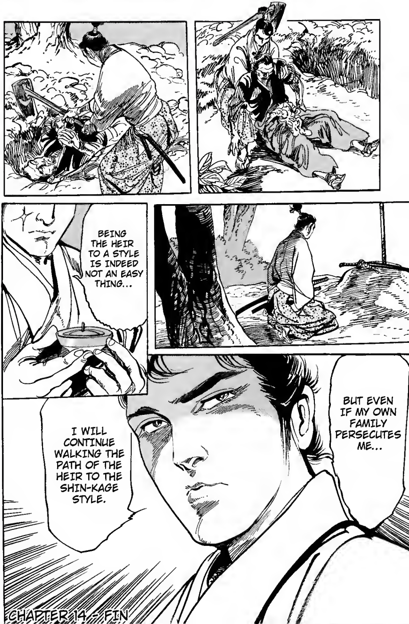

I'M A WARRIOR. I CAN'T BREAK MY PROMISE.
YOU WON'T DIE EASILY FROM A SLASHED STOMACH.
THEY SAY IT TAKES MORE THAN HALF A DAY OF SUFFERING.
I DIDN'T TAKE YOU FOR BEING THIS RUTHLESS.
I WANT TO KNOW WHO HIRED YOU!
TELL ME!
ドヴッ
THWUMP
HE-HE-HE.


YOUR ABILITIES HAVE INDEED EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS BUT...
YOU'RE REALLY FUCKING SLOW IN THE HEAD.
CAN'T YOU SEE HOW ANNOYING IT IS FOR THE YAGYU SHIN-KAGE, SWORD INSTRUCTORS TO THE SHOGUN, MIND YOU...
WHEN EVERYONE IN EDO GOES ON ABOUT HOW YOU'RE THE STRONGEST OR SECOND STRONGEST IN JAPAN?!
THE EDO YAGYU ...
THAT'S WHY TAJIMA YAGYU TRIED TO KILL YOU IN SPITE OF HIS OLD AGE!
BY YOU, MY STUPID POPS HAS LOST BOTH OF HIS ARMS AND IS NOW ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE!
YOU ARE ...
THAT OLD WARRIOR WAS MASTER TAJIMA ...?
TING


I AM TAJIMA'S YOUNGEST SON, GISEN!
ALSO KNOWN AS MASTER RETSUDO!
FROM NOW ON I'LL BE LOOKING FORWARD TO STICKING THIS IN YOUR CORPSE'S HEAD!
EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON...
THE BUDDHA SHOWS THE WAY...*
THE EDO YAGYU ARE BEHIND THIS...

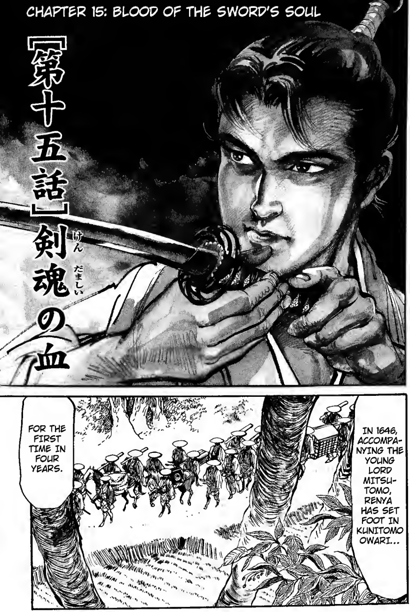
* RETSUDO IS RECITING BUDDHIST SUTRAS.

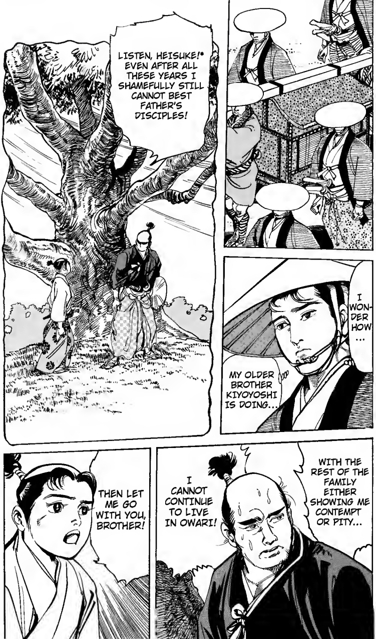

MY GREAT UNCLE TRIED TO KILL ME.
I RAISED MY SWORD AGAINST MY OWN GREAT UNCLE.
WHAT A THING TO DO AMONG ONE'S OWN FAMILY...
RENYA BORROWED A FARMING TOOL FROM A NEARBY FARMHOUSE.


BEING THE HEIR TO A STYLE IS INDEED NOT AN EASY THING…
BUT EVEN IF MY OWN FAMILY PERSECUTES ME…
I WILL CONTINUE WALKING THE PATH OF THE HEIR TO THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE.
CHAPTER 14 - FIN

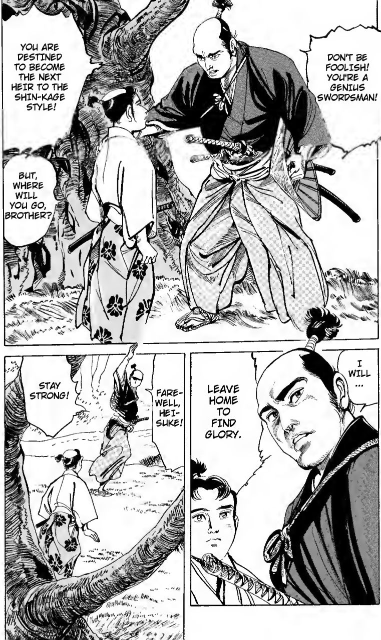
●［第十四話］完●

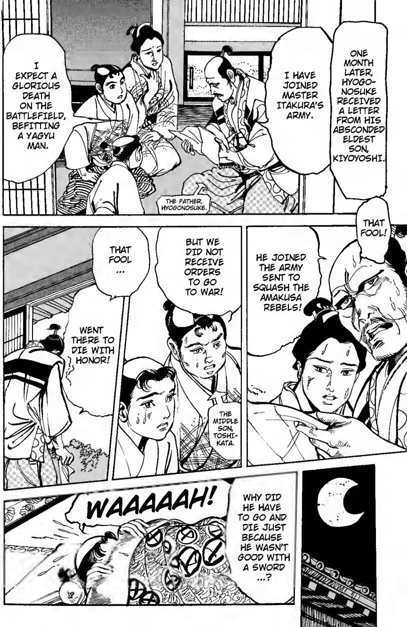
CHAPTER 15: BLOOD OF THE SWORD'S SOUL

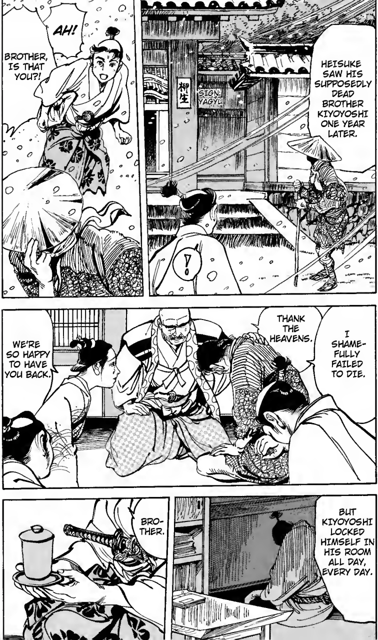

「第十五話」剣魂の血
けん だましい
IN 1646, ACCOMPANYING THE YOUNG LORD MITSU-TOMO, RENYA HAS SET FOOT IN KUNITOMO OWARI...
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FOUR YEARS.

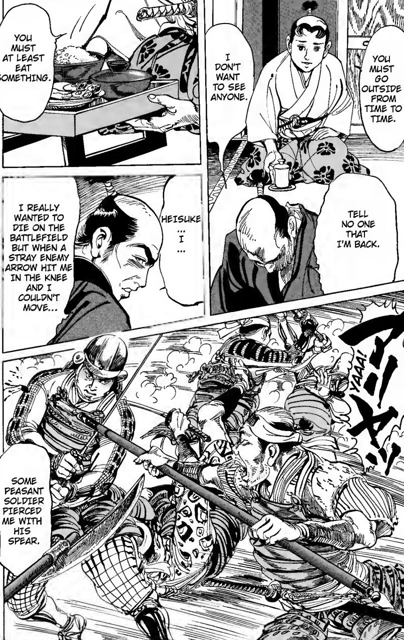

I WONDER HOW…
MY OLDER BROTHER KIYOYOSHI IS DOING…
LISTEN, HEISUKE!* EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS I SHAMEFULLY STILL CANNOT BEST FATHER'S DISCIPLES!
WITH THE REST OF THE FAMILY EITHER SHOWING ME CONTEMPT OR PITY…
I CANNOT CONTINUE TO LIVE IN OWARI!
THEN LET ME GO WITH YOU, BROTHER!

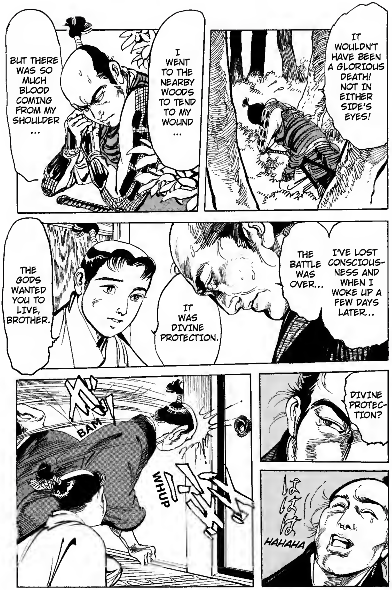
* HEISUKE: RENYA'S CHILDHOOD NAME.

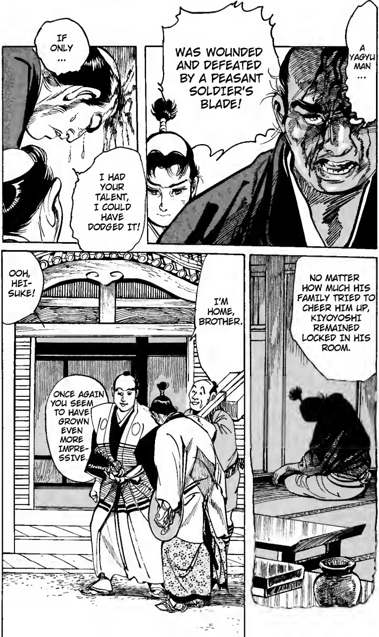

DON'T BE FOOLISH! YOU'RE A GENIUS SWORDSMAN!
YOU ARE DESTINED TO BECOME THE NEXT HEIR TO THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE!
BUT, WHERE WILL YOU GO, BROTHER?
I WILL ...
LEAVE HOME TO FIND GLORY.
FARE-WELL, HEI-SUKE!
STAY STRONG!

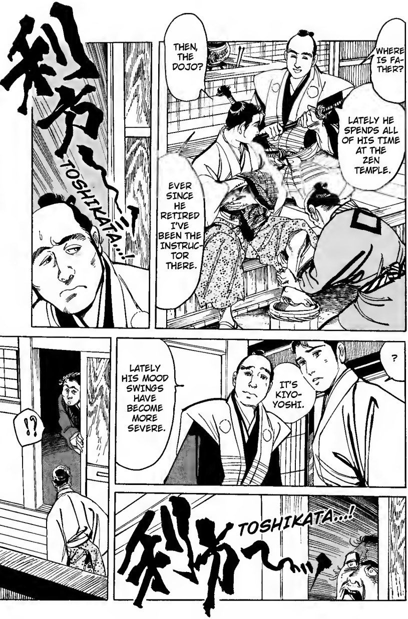

ONE MONTH LATER, HYOGONOSUKE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM HIS ABSCONDED ELDEST SON, KIYOYOSHI.
I HAVE JOINED MASTER ITAKURA'S ARMY.
I EXPECT A GLORIOUS DEATH ON THE BATTLEFIELD, BEFITTING A YAGYU MAN.
THE FATHER, HYOGONOSUKE.
THAT FOOL!
HE JOINED THE ARMY SENT TO SQUASH THE AMAKUSA REBELS!
BUT WE DID NOT RECEIVE ORDERS TO GO TO WAR!
THE MIDDLE SON, TOSHIKATA.
THAT FOOL ...
WENT THERE TO DIE WITH HONOR!
WHY DID HE HAVE TO GO AND DIE JUST BECAUSE HE WASN'T GOOD WITH A SWORD ...?
WAAAAAH!

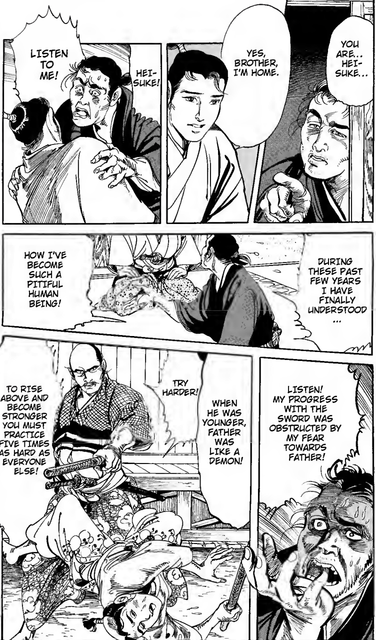

HEISUKE SAW HIS SUPPOSEDLY DEAD BROTHER KIYOYOSHI ONE YEAR LATER.
柳生
SIGN: YAGYU
!
AH!
BROTHER, IS THAT YOU?!
I SHAMEFULLY FAILED TO DIE.
THANK THE HEAVENS.
WE'RE SO HAPPY TO HAVE YOU BACK.
BUT KIYOYOSHI LOCKED HIMSELF IN HIS ROOM ALL DAY, EVERY DAY.
BROTHER.

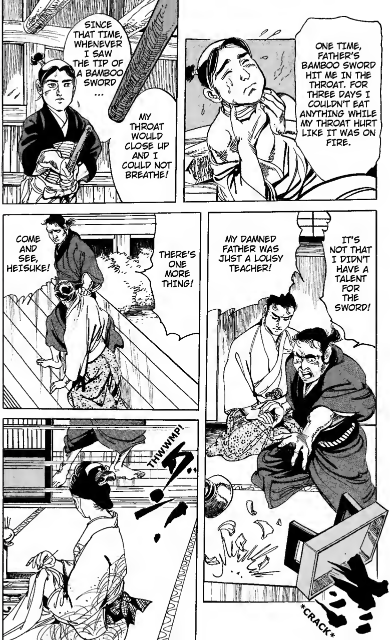

YOU MUST GO OUTSIDE FROM TIME TO TIME.
I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYONE.
TELL NO ONE THAT I'M BACK.
YOU MUST AT LEAST EAT SOMETHING.
HEISUKE ... I ...
I REALLY WANTED TO DIE ON THE BATTLEFIELD BUT WHEN A STRAY ENEMY ARROW HIT ME IN THE KNEE AND I COULDN'T MOVE...
YAAA!
SOME PEASANT SOLDIER PIERCED ME WITH HIS SPEAR.

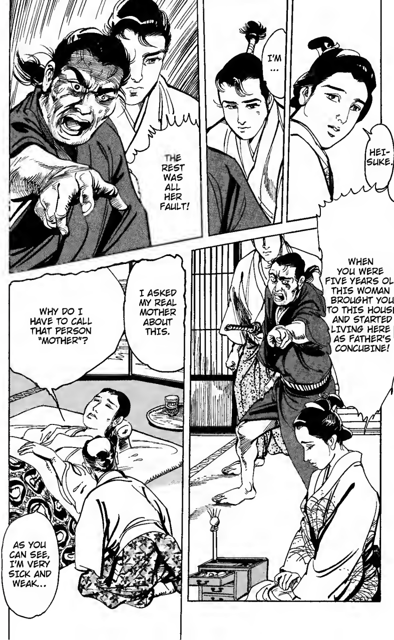

IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A GLORIOUS DEATH! NOT IN EITHER SIDE'S EYES!
I WENT TO THE NEARBY WOODS TO TEND TO MY WOUND ...
BUT THERE WAS SO MUCH BLOOD COMING FROM MY SHOULDER ...
I'VE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AND WHEN I WOKE UP A FEW DAYS LATER...
THE BATTLE WAS OVER...
IT WAS DIVINE PROTECTION.
THE GODS WANTED YOU TO LIVE, BROTHER.
DIVINE PROTECTION?
ははは
HAHAHA
BAM
WHUP

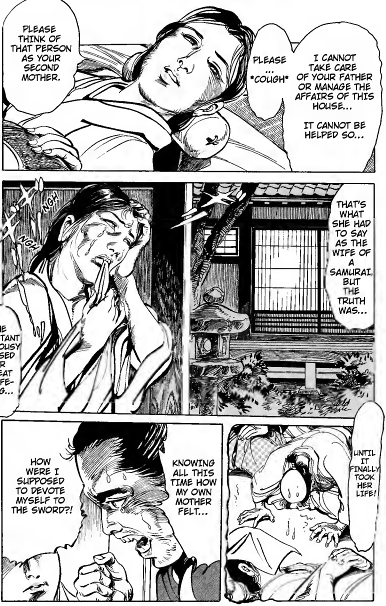

A YAGYU MAN ...
WAS WOUNDED AND DEFEATED BY A PEASANT SOLDIER'S BLADE!
IF ONLY ...
I HAD YOUR TALENT, I COULD HAVE DODGED IT!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH HIS FAMILY TRIED TO CHEER HIM UP, KIYOYOSHI REMAINED LOCKED IN HIS ROOM.
I'M HOME, BROTHER.
OOH, HEISUKE!
ONCE AGAIN YOU SEEM TO HAVE GROWN EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE.

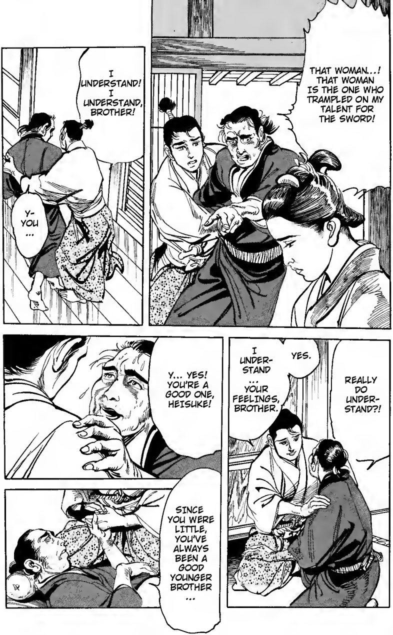

WHERE IS FATHER?
LATELY HE SPENDS ALL OF HIS TIME AT THE ZEN TEMPLE.
THEN, THE DOJO?
EVER SINCE HE RETIRED I'VE BEEN THE INSTRUCTOR THERE.
利方
TOSHIKATA...!
?
IT'S KIYOYOSHI.
LATELY HIS MOOD SWINGS HAVE BECOME MORE SEVERE.
!?
利方
TOSHIKATA...!

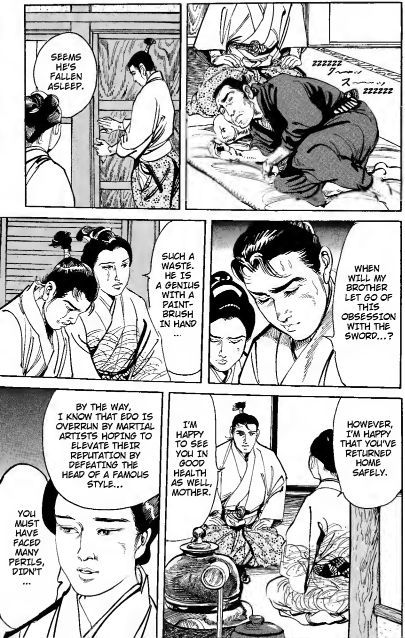

YOU ARE... HEI-SUKE...
YES, BROTHER, I'M HOME.
HEI-SUKE!
LISTEN TO ME!
DURING THESE PAST FEW YEARS I HAVE FINALLY UNDERSTOOD ...
HOW I'VE BECOME SUCH A PITIFUL HUMAN BEING!
LISTEN! MY PROGRESS WITH THE SWORD WAS OBSTRUCTED BY MY FEAR TOWARDS FATHER!
WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER, FATHER WAS LIKE A DEMON!
TRY HARDER!
TO RISE ABOVE AND BECOME STRONGER YOU MUST PRACTICE FIVE TIMES AS HARD AS EVERYONE ELSE!

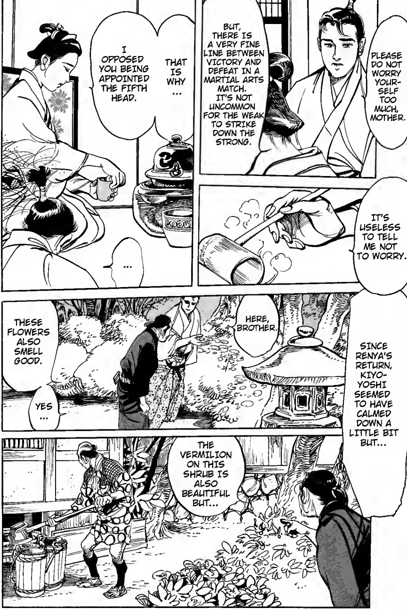

ONE TIME, FATHER'S BAMBOO SWORD HIT ME IN THE THROAT. FOR THREE DAYS I COULDN'T EAT ANYTHING WHILE MY THROAT HURT LIKE IT WAS ON FIRE.
SINCE THAT TIME, WHENEVER I SAW THE TIP OF A BAMBOO SWORD ...
MY THROAT WOULD CLOSE UP AND I COULD NOT BREATHE!
IT'S NOT THAT I DIDN'T HAVE A TALENT FOR THE SWORD!
MY DAMNED FATHER WAS JUST A LOUSY TEACHER!
CRACK
THERE'S ONE MORE THING!
COME AND SEE, HEISUKE!
THWWMP!

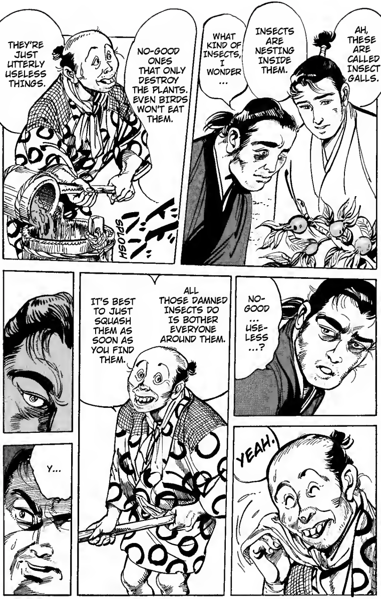

HEI-SUKE.
I'M ...
THE REST WAS ALL HER FAULT!
WHEN YOU WERE FIVE YEARS OLD THIS WOMAN BROUGHT YOU TO THIS HOUSE AND STARTED LIVING HERE AS FATHER'S CONCUBINE!
I ASKED MY REAL MOTHER ABOUT THIS.
WHY DO I HAVE TO CALL THAT PERSON "MOTHER"?
AS YOU CAN SEE, I'M VERY SICK AND WEAK...

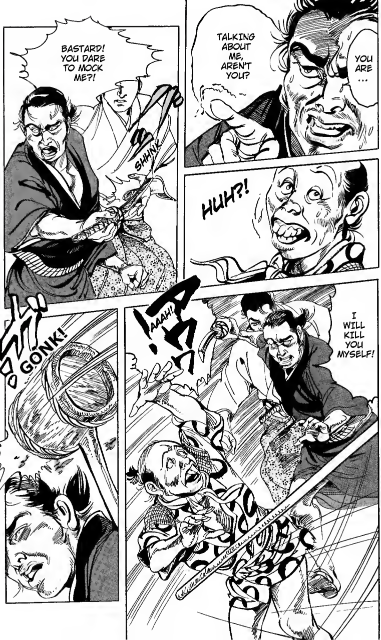

I CANNOT TAKE CARE OF YOUR FATHER OR MANAGE THE AFFAIRS OF THIS HOUSE... IT CANNOT BE HELPED SO...
PLEASE ... *COUGH*
PLEASE THINK OF THAT PERSON AS YOUR SECOND MOTHER.
THAT'S WHAT SHE HAD TO SAY AS THE WIFE OF A SAMURAI BUT THE TRUTH WAS...
NGH
NGH
THE CONSTANT JEALOUSY CAUSED HER GREAT SUFFERING...
UNTIL IT FINALLY TOOK HER LIFE!
KNOWING ALL THIS TIME HOW MY OWN MOTHER FELT...
HOW WERE I SUPPOSED TO DEVOTE MYSELF TO THE SWORD?!

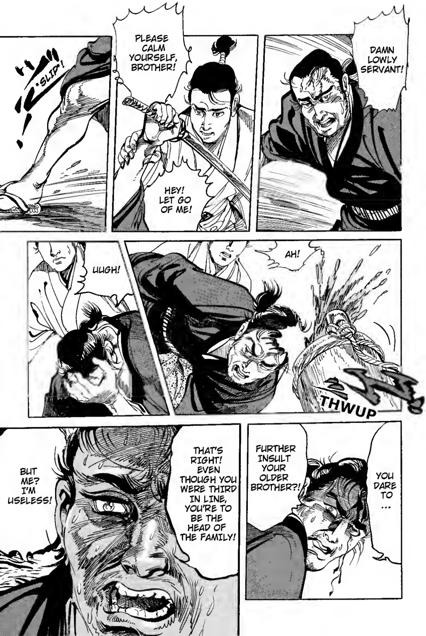

THAT WOMAN...! THAT WOMAN IS THE ONE WHO TRAMPLED ON MY TALENT FOR THE SWORD!
I UNDERSTAND! I UNDERSTAND, BROTHER!
Y-YOU ...
REALLY DO UNDERSTAND?!
YES.
I UNDERSTAND ... YOUR FEELINGS, BROTHER.
Y... YES! YOU'RE A GOOD ONE, HEISUKE!
SINCE YOU WERE LITTLE, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A GOOD YOUNGER BROTHER ...

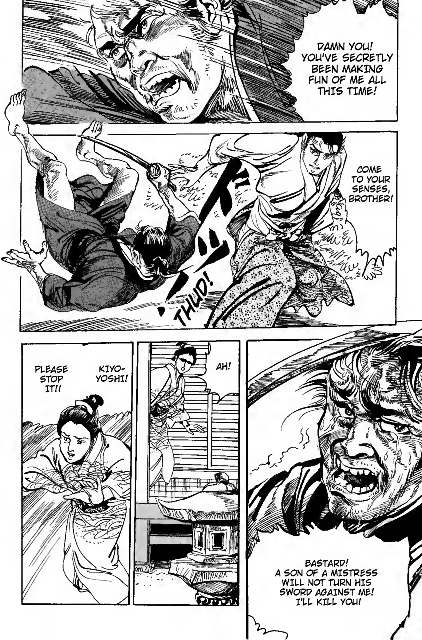

zzzzzz
ク〜…ッ
ス〜…ッ
zzzzzz
SEEMS HE'S FALLEN ASLEEP.
WHEN WILL MY BROTHER LET GO OF THIS OBSESSION WITH THE SWORD...?
SUCH A WASTE. HE IS A GENIUS WITH A PAINTBRUSH IN HAND ...
HOWEVER, I'M HAPPY THAT YOU'VE RETURNED HOME SAFELY.
I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOU IN GOOD HEALTH AS WELL, MOTHER.
BY THE WAY, I KNOW THAT EDO IS OVERRUN BY MARTIAL ARTISTS HOPING TO ELEVATE THEIR REPUTATION BY DEFEATING THE HEAD OF A FAMOUS STYLE...
YOU MUST HAVE FACED MANY PERILS, DIDN'T ...

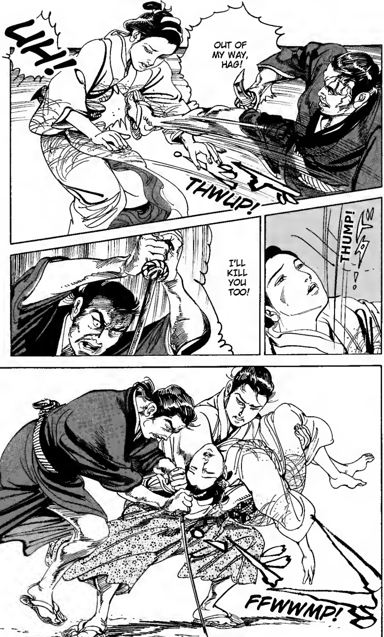

PLEASE DO NOT WORRY YOURSELF TOO MUCH, MOTHER.
BUT, THERE IS A VERY FINE LINE BETWEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT IN A MARTIAL ARTS MATCH. IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR THE WEAK TO STRIKE DOWN THE STRONG.
IT'S USELESS TO TELL ME NOT TO WORRY.
THAT IS WHY ...
I OPPOSED YOU BEING APPOINTED THE FIFTH HEAD.
...
SINCE RENYA'S RETURN, KIYOYOSHI SEEMED TO HAVE CALMED DOWN A LITTLE BIT BUT...
HERE, BROTHER.
THESE FLOWERS ALSO SMELL GOOD.
YES ...
THE VERMILION ON THIS SHRUB IS ALSO BEAUTIFUL BUT...

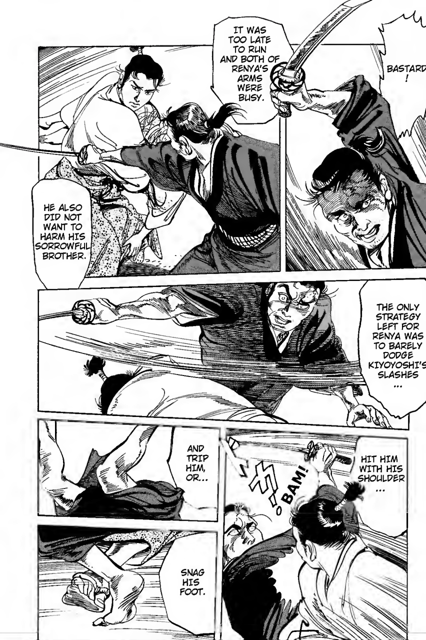

AH, THESE ARE CALLED INSECT GALLS.
INSECTS ARE NESTING INSIDE THEM.
WHAT KIND OF INSECTS, I WONDER ...
NO-GOOD ONES THAT ONLY DESTROY THE PLANTS. EVEN BIRDS WON'T EAT THEM.
THEY'RE JUST UTTERLY USELESS THINGS.
SPLOSH
NO-GOOD ... USE-LESS ...?
ALL THOSE DAMNED INSECTS DO IS BOTHER EVERYONE AROUND THEM.
IT'S BEST TO JUST SQUASH THEM AS SOON AS YOU FIND THEM.
YEAH.
Y...

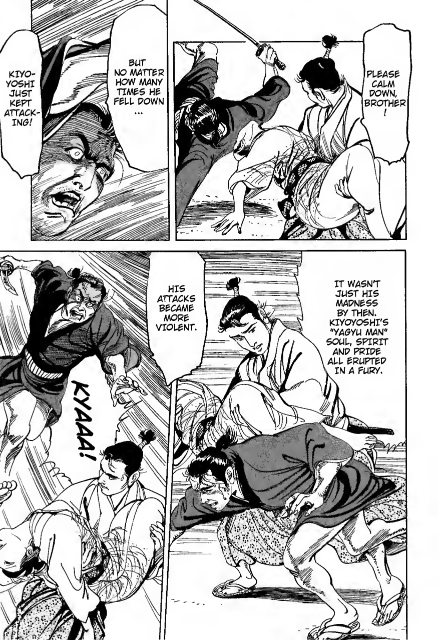

YOU ARE ...
TALKING ABOUT ME, AREN'T YOU?
HUH?!
BASTARD! YOU DARE TO MOCK ME?!
SHHNK
I WILL KILL YOU MYSELF!
AAAH!
GONK!

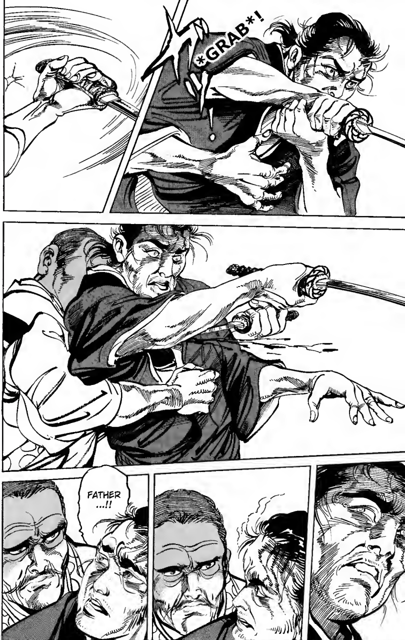

DAMN LOWLY SERVANT!
PLEASE CALM YOURSELF, BROTHER!
HEY! LET GO OF ME!
SLIP!
AH!
THWUP
UUGH!
YOU DARE TO ...
FURTHER INSULT YOUR OLDER BROTHER?!
THAT'S RIGHT! EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE THIRD IN LINE, YOU'RE TO BE THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY!
BUT ME? I'M USELESS!

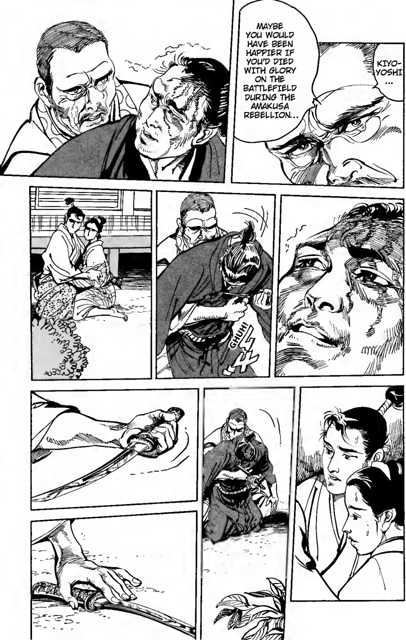

DAMN YOU! YOU'VE SECRETLY BEEN MAKING FUN OF ME ALL THIS TIME!
COME TO YOUR SENSES, BROTHER!
THUD!
BASTARD! A SON OF A MISTRESS WILL NOT TURN HIS SWORD AGAINST ME! I'LL KILL YOU!
AH!
KIYO-YOSHI!
PLEASE STOP IT!!

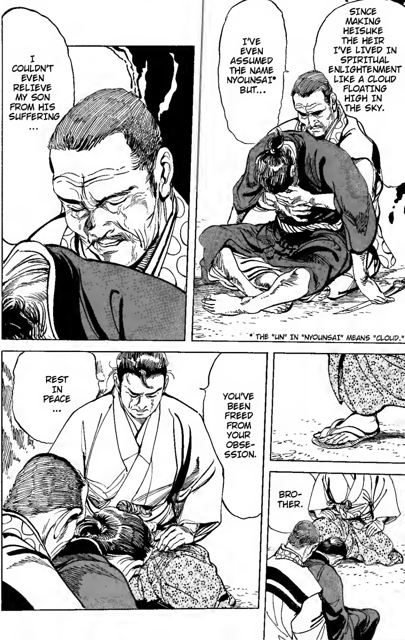

UH!
OUT OF MY WAY, HAG!
THWUP!
THUMP!
I'LL KILL YOU TOO!
FFWWMP!


IT WAS TOO LATE TO RUN AND BOTH OF RENYA'S ARMS WERE BUSY.
HE ALSO DID NOT WANT TO HARM HIS SORROWFUL BROTHER.
BASTARD!
THE ONLY STRATEGY LEFT FOR RENYA WAS TO BARELY DODGE KIYOYOSHI'S SLASHES ...
AND TRIP HIM, OR...
SNAG HIS FOOT.
BAM!
HIT HIM WITH HIS SHOULDER ...

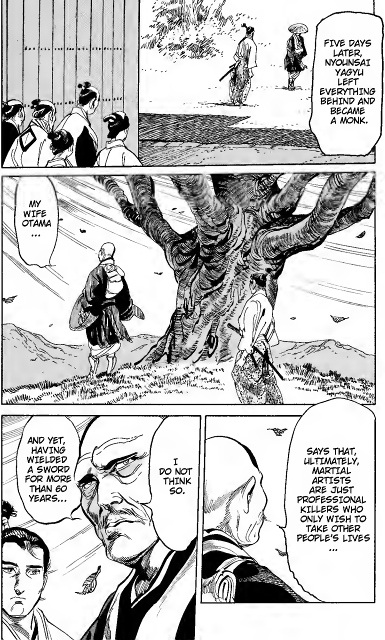

PLEASE CALM DOWN, BROTHER!
BUT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES HE FELL DOWN ...
KIYOYOSHI JUST KEPT ATTACKING!
IT WASN'T JUST HIS MADNESS BY THEN. KIYOYOSHI'S "YAGYU MAN" SOUL, SPIRIT AND PRIDE ALL ERUPTED IN A FURY.
HIS ATTACKS BECAME MORE VIOLENT.
KYAAA!

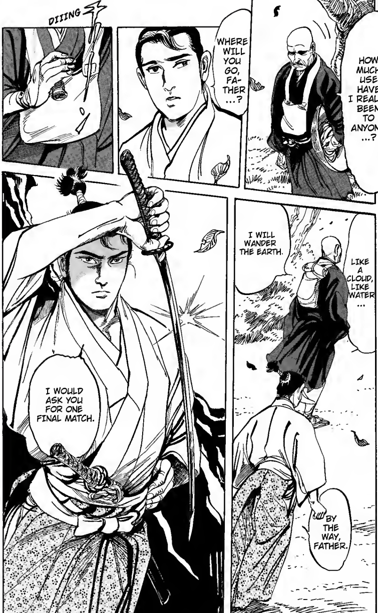

GRAB!
FATHER ...!!

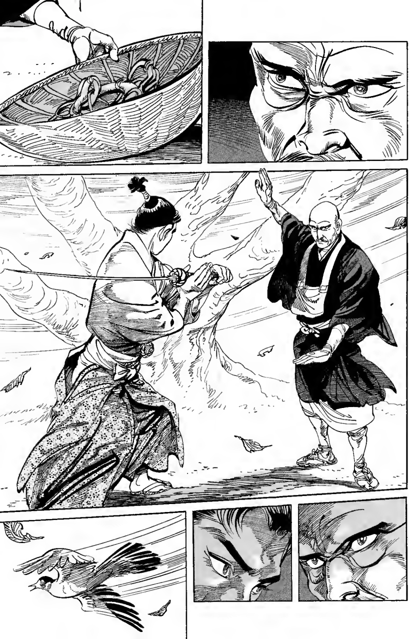

KIYOYOSHI...
MAYBE YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPIER IF YOU'D DIED WITH GLORY ON THE BATTLEFIELD DURING THE AMAKUSA REBELLION...
GHUH!
4

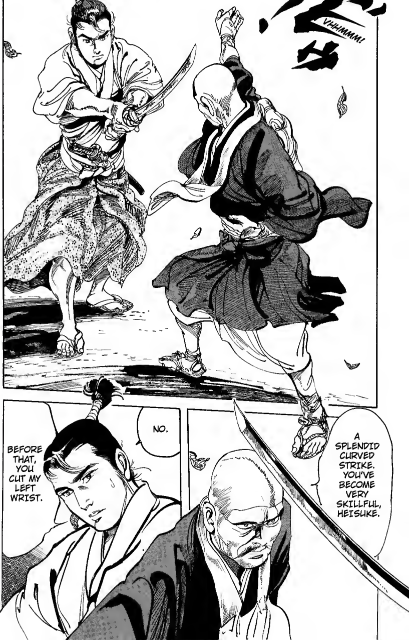

SINCE MAKING HEISUKE THE HEIR I'VE LIVED IN SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT LIKE A CLOUD FLOATING HIGH IN THE SKY.
I'VE EVEN ASSUMED THE NAME NYOUNSAI* BUT...
I COULDN'T EVEN RELIEVE MY SON FROM HIS SUFFERING ...
BROTHER.
YOU'VE BEEN FREED FROM YOUR OBSESSION.
REST IN PEACE ...

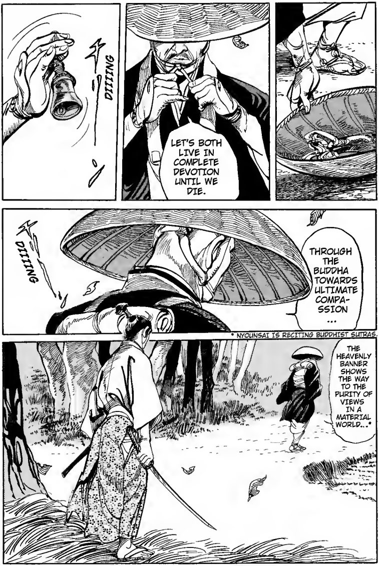
* THE "UN" IN "NYOUNSAI" MEANS "CLOUD."


FIVE DAYS LATER, NYOUNSAI YAGYU LEFT EVERYTHING BEHIND AND BECAME A MONK.
MY WIFE OTAMA ...
SAYS THAT, ULTIMATELY, MARTIAL ARTISTS ARE JUST PROFESSIONAL KILLERS WHO ONLY WISH TO TAKE OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES ...
I DO NOT THINK SO.
AND YET, HAVING WIELDED A SWORD FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS...

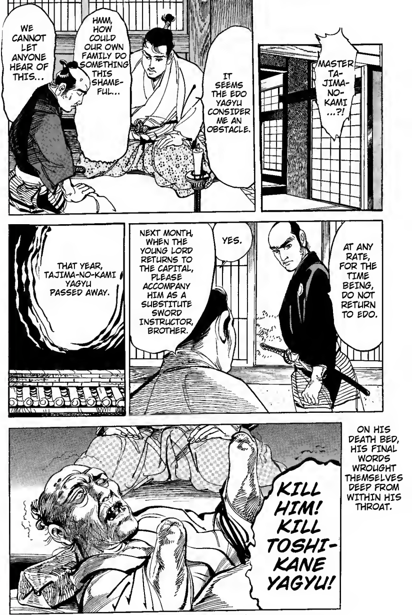

HOW MUCH USE HAVE I REALLY BEEN TO ANYONE ...?
WHERE WILL YOU GO, FATHER ...?
DIIING
I WILL WANDER THE EARTH.
LIKE A CLOUD, LIKE WATER ...
BY THE WAY, FATHER.
I WOULD ASK YOU FOR ONE FINAL MATCH.




VHHMMM!
A SPLENDID CURVED STRIKE. YOU'VE BECOME VERY SKILLFUL, HEISUKE.
NO.
BEFORE THAT, YOU CUT MY LEFT WRIST.


DIIIING
LET'S BOTH LIVE IN COMPLETE DEVOTION UNTIL WE DIE.
DIIING
THROUGH THE BUDDHA TOWARDS ULTIMATE COMPASSION ...
THE HEAVENLY BANNER SHOWS THE WAY TO THE PURITY OF VIEWS IN A MATERIAL WORLD...*

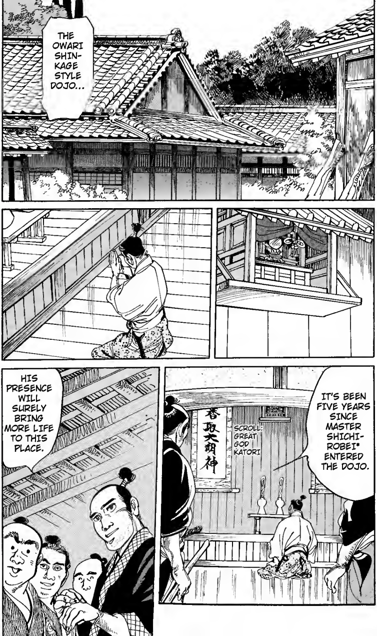
* NYOUNSAI IS RECITING BUDDHIST SUTRAS.


MASTER TAJIMA-NO-KAMI...?!
IT SEEMS THE EDO YAGYU CONSIDER ME AN OBSTACLE.
HMM, HOW COULD OUR OWN FAMILY DO SOMETHING THIS SHAMEFUL...
WE CANNOT LET ANYONE HEAR OF THIS...
AT ANY RATE, FOR THE TIME BEING, DO NOT RETURN TO EDO.
YES.
NEXT MONTH, WHEN THE YOUNG LORD RETURNS TO THE CAPITAL, PLEASE ACCOMPANY HIM AS A SUBSTITUTE SWORD INSTRUCTOR, BROTHER.
THAT YEAR, TAJIMA-NO-KAMI YAGYU PASSED AWAY.
ON HIS DEATH BED, HIS FINAL WORDS WROUGHT THEMSELVES DEEP FROM WITHIN HIS THROAT.
KILL HIM! KILL TOSHIKANE YAGYU!

●[第十五話] 完● CHAPTER 15 - FIN

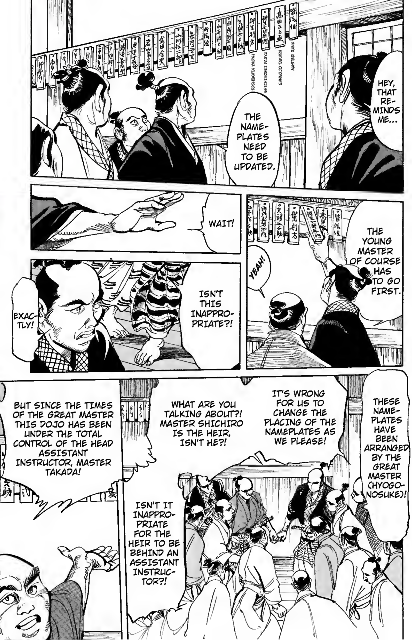
CHAPTER 16: THE DEFENDING ATTACK

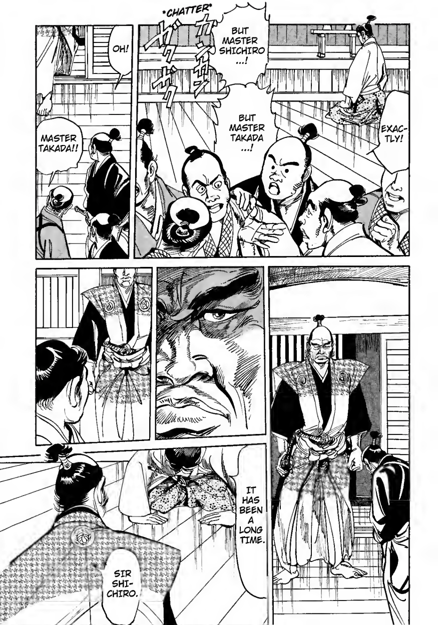
「第十六話」合（が）っし打ち

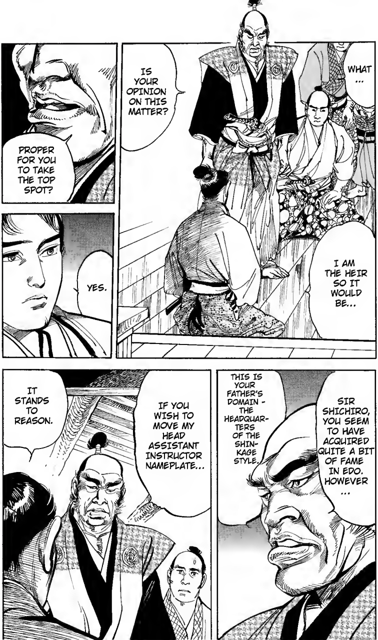

THE OWARI SHINKAGE STYLE DOJO...
SCROLL: GREAT GOD KATORI
香取大明神
IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE MASTER SHICHIROBEI* ENTERED THE DOJO.
HIS PRESENCE WILL SURELY BRING MORE LIFE TO THIS PLACE.

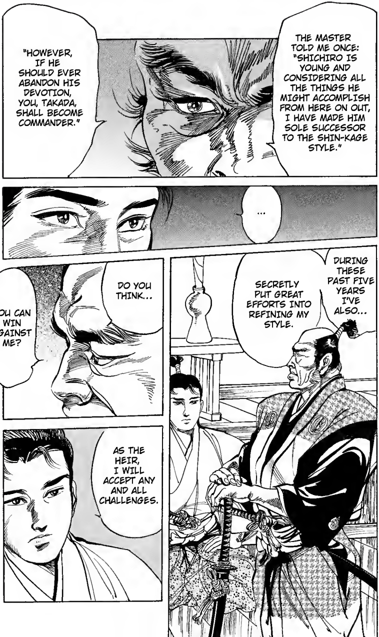
---

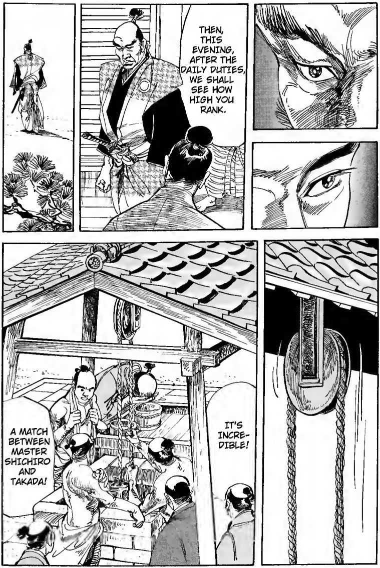
* SHICHIROBEI: RENYA YAGYU'S CHILDHOOD NAME.

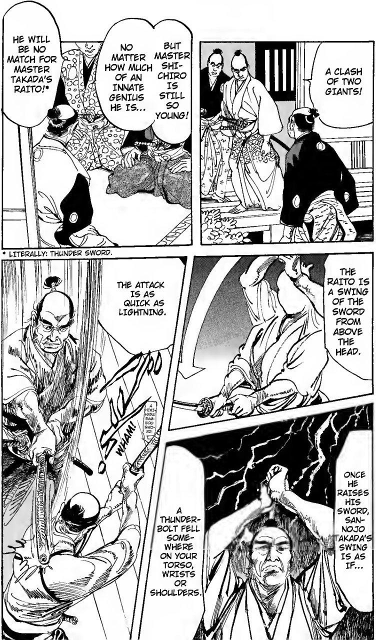

MASTER RANK
SANNOJO TAKADA
SHICHIROBEI YAGYU
TOSHIKATA YAGYU
HEY, THAT REMINDS ME...
THE NAMEPLATES NEED TO BE UPDATED.
THE YOUNG MASTER OF COURSE HAS TO GO FIRST.
YEAH!
WAIT!
ISN'T THIS INAPPROPRIATE?!
EXACTLY!
THESE NAMEPLATES HAVE BEEN ARRANGED BY THE GREAT MASTER (HYOGONOSUKE)!
IT'S WRONG FOR US TO CHANGE THE PLACING OF THE NAMEPLATES AS WE PLEASE!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! MASTER SHICHIRO IS THE HEIR, ISN'T HE?!
ISN'T IT INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE HEIR TO BE BEHIND AN ASSISTANT INSTRUCTOR?!
BUT SINCE THE TIMES OF THE GREAT MASTER THIS DOJO HAS BEEN UNDER THE TOTAL CONTROL OF THE HEAD ASSISTANT INSTRUCTOR, MASTER TAKADA!


CHATTER
カンカン
ガクガク
BUT MASTER SHICHIRO ...!
EXACTLY!
BUT MASTER TAKADA ...!
OH!
MASTER TAKADA!!
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME.
SIR SHICHIRO.

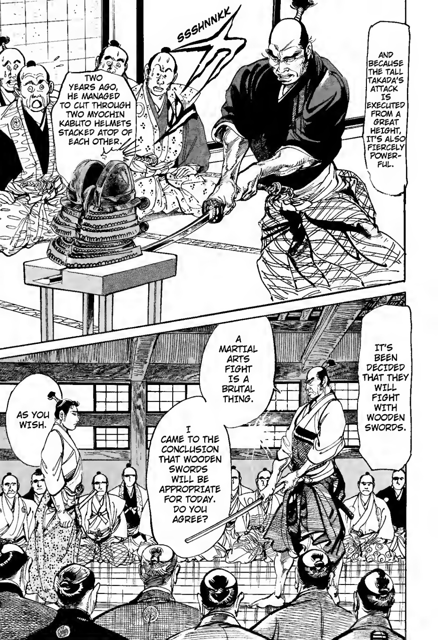

WHAT ...
IS YOUR OPINION ON THIS MATTER?
I AM THE HEIR SO IT WOULD BE...
PROPER FOR YOU TO TAKE THE TOP SPOT?
YES.
SIR SHICHIRO, YOU SEEM TO HAVE ACQUIRED QUITE A BIT OF FAME IN EDO. HOWEVER ...
THIS IS YOUR FATHER'S DOMAIN - THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE.
IF YOU WISH TO MOVE MY HEAD ASSISTANT INSTRUCTOR NAMEPLATE...
IT STANDS TO REASON.

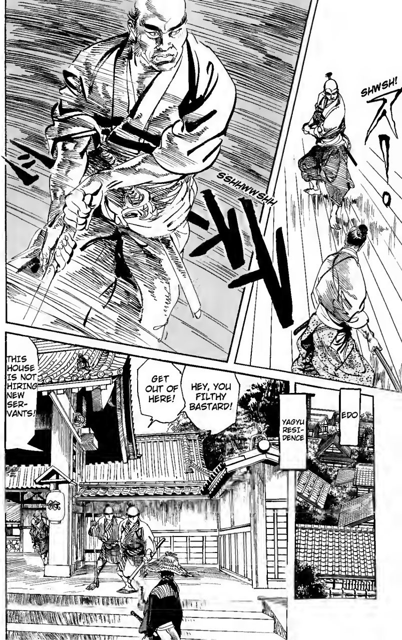

THE MASTER TOLD ME ONCE: "SHICHIRO IS YOUNG AND CONSIDERING ALL THE THINGS HE MIGHT ACCOMPLISH FROM HERE ON OUT, I HAVE MADE HIM SOLE SUCCESSOR TO THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE."
"HOWEVER, IF HE SHOULD EVER ABANDON HIS DEVOTION, YOU, TAKADA, SHALL BECOME COMMANDER."
...
DURING THESE PAST FIVE YEARS I'VE ALSO...
SECRETLY PUT GREAT EFFORTS INTO REFINING MY STYLE.
DO YOU THINK...
YOU CAN WIN AGAINST ME?
AS THE HEIR, I WILL ACCEPT ANY AND ALL CHALLENGES.

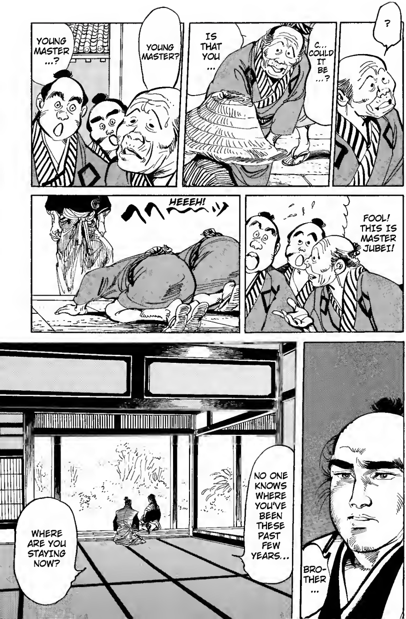

THEN, THIS EVENING, AFTER THE DAILY DUTIES, WE SHALL SEE HOW HIGH YOU RANK.
IT'S INCREDIBLE!
A MATCH BETWEEN MASTER SHICHIRO AND TAKADA!

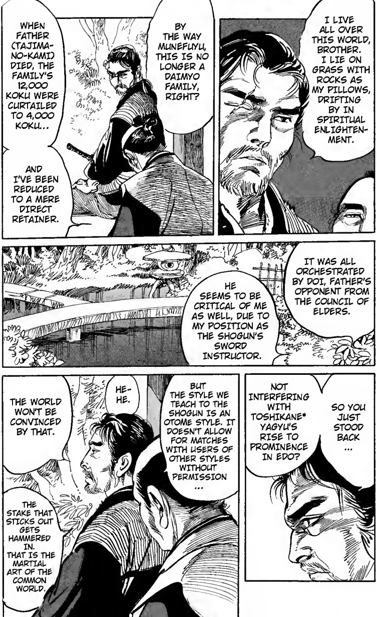

HE WILL BE NO MATCH FOR MASTER TAKADA'S RAITO!*
NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF AN INNATE GENIUS HE IS...
BUT MASTER SHICHIRO IS STILL SO YOUNG!
A CLASH OF TWO GIANTS!
THE ATTACK IS AS QUICK AS LIGHTNING.
WHAM!
A HIKIHADA BAMBOO SWORD!
THE RAITO IS A SWING OF THE SWORD FROM ABOVE THE HEAD.
ONCE HE RAISES HIS SWORD, SANNOJO TAKADA'S SWING IS AS IF...
A THUNDERBOLT FELL SOMEWHERE ON YOUR TORSO, WRISTS OR SHOULDERS.

* LITERALLY: THUNDER SWORD.

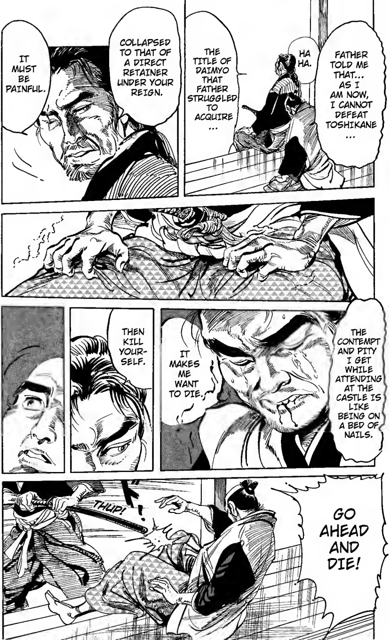

AND BECAUSE THE TALL TAKADA'S ATTACK IS EXECUTED FROM A GREAT HEIGHT, IT'S ALSO FIERCELY POWERFUL.
SSSHNNKK
TWO YEARS AGO, HE MANAGED TO CUT THROUGH TWO MYOCHIN KABUTO HELMETS STACKED ATOP OF EACH OTHER.
IT'S BEEN DECIDED THAT THEY WILL FIGHT WITH WOODEN SWORDS.
A MARTIAL ARTS FIGHT IS A BRUTAL THING.
I CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT WOODEN SWORDS WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR TODAY. DO YOU AGREE?
AS YOU WISH.

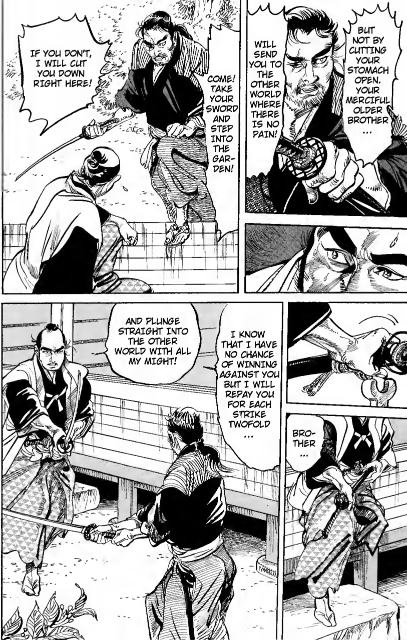

SHWSH!
SSHHWWSHH
EDO
YAGYU RESIDENCE
HEY, YOU FILTHY BASTARD!
GET OUT OF HERE!
THIS HOUSE IS NOT HIRING NEW SERVANTS!

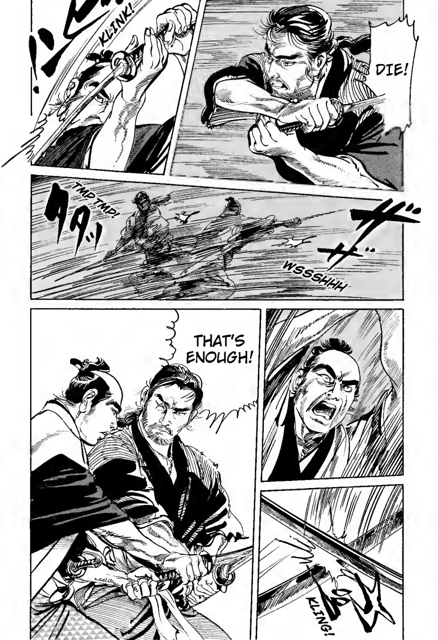

?
C... COULD IT BE ...?
IS THAT YOU ...
YOUNG MASTER?
YOUNG MASTER ...?
FOOL! THIS IS MASTER JUBEI!
HEEEH!
へへ〜〜ッ
BROTHER ...
NO ONE KNOWS WHERE YOU'VE BEEN THESE PAST FEW YEARS...
WHERE ARE YOU STAYING NOW?

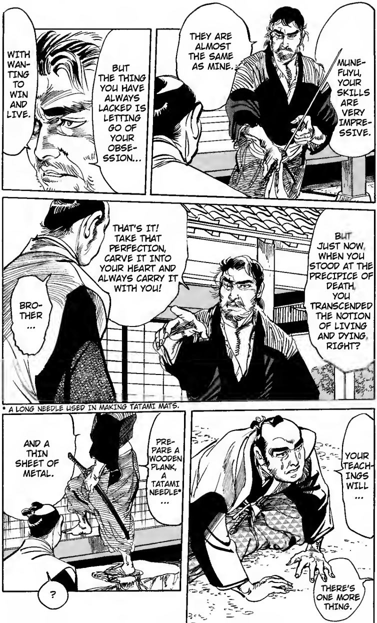

I LIVE ALL OVER THIS WORLD, BROTHER. I LIE ON GRASS WITH ROCKS AS MY PILLOWS, DRIFTING BY IN SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT.
BY THE WAY MUNEFUYU, THIS IS NO LONGER A DAIMYO FAMILY, RIGHT?
WHEN FATHER (TAJIMA-NO-KAMI) DIED, THE FAMILY'S 12,000 KOKU WERE CURTAILED TO 4,000 KOKU...
AND I'VE BEEN REDUCED TO A MERE DIRECT RETAINER.
IT WAS ALL ORCHESTRATED BY DOI, FATHER'S OPPONENT FROM THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS.
HE SEEMS TO BE CRITICAL OF ME AS WELL, DUE TO MY POSITION AS THE SHOGUN'S SWORD INSTRUCTOR.
SO YOU JUST STOOD BACK ...
NOT INTERFERING WITH TOSHIKANE* YAGYU'S RISE TO PROMINENCE IN EDO?
BUT THE STYLE WE TEACH TO THE SHOGUN IS AN OTOME STYLE. IT DOESN'T ALLOW FOR MATCHES WITH USERS OF OTHER STYLES WITHOUT PERMISSION ...
HE-HE.
THE WORLD WON'T BE CONVINCED BY THAT.
THE STAKE THAT STICKS OUT GETS HAMMERED IN. THAT IS THE MARTIAL ART OF THE COMMON WORLD.

* TOSHIKANE YAGYU = RENYASAI

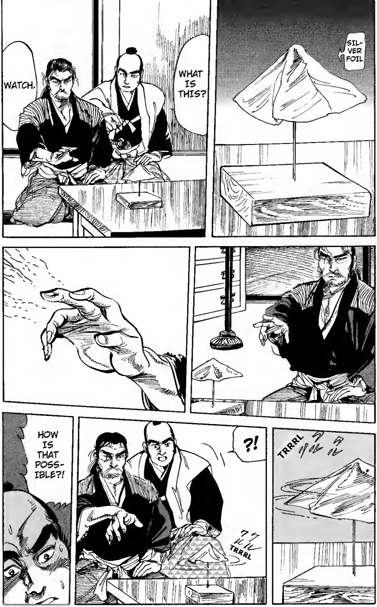

FATHER TOLD ME THAT... AS I AM NOW, I CANNOT DEFEAT TOSHIKANE ...
HA HA.
THE TITLE OF DAIMYO THAT FATHER STRUGGLED TO ACQUIRE ...
COLLAPSED TO THAT OF A DIRECT RETAINER UNDER YOUR REIGN.
IT MUST BE PAINFUL.
THE CONTEMPT AND PITY I GET WHILE ATTENDING AT THE CASTLE IS LIKE BEING ON A BED OF NAILS.
IT MAKES ME WANT TO DIE.
THEN KILL YOURSELF.
GO AHEAD AND DIE!
THUP!

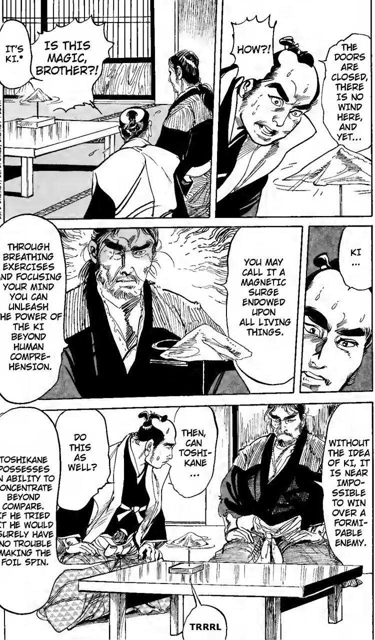

BUT NOT BY CUTTING YOUR STOMACH OPEN. YOUR MERCIFUL OLDER BROTHER ...
WILL SEND YOU TO THE OTHER WORLD WHERE THERE IS NO PAIN!
COME! TAKE YOUR SWORD AND STEP INTO THE GARDEN!
IF YOU DON'T, I WILL CUT YOU DOWN RIGHT HERE!
BROTHER ...
I KNOW THAT I HAVE NO CHANCE OF WINNING AGAINST YOU BUT I WILL REPAY YOU FOR EACH STRIKE TWOFOLD ...
AND PLUNGE STRAIGHT INTO THE OTHER WORLD WITH ALL MY MIGHT!


DIE!
KLINK!
ン
ザッ
ザッ
WSSSHHH
TMP TMP!
タタッ
KLING!
THAT'S ENOUGH!


MUNEFUYU, YOUR SKILLS ARE VERY IMPRESSIVE.
THEY ARE ALMOST THE SAME AS MINE.
BUT THE THING YOU HAVE ALWAYS LACKED IS LETTING GO OF YOUR OBSESSION...
WITH WANTING TO WIN AND LIVE.
BUT JUST NOW, WHEN YOU STOOD AT THE PRECIPICE OF DEATH, YOU TRANSCENDED THE NOTION OF LIVING AND DYING, RIGHT?
THAT'S IT! TAKE THAT PERFECTION, CARVE IT INTO YOUR HEART AND ALWAYS CARRY IT WITH YOU!
BROTHER...
YOUR TEACHINGS WILL...
THERE'S ONE MORE THING.
PREPARE A WOODEN PLANK, A TATAMI NEEDLE*...
AND A THIN SHEET OF METAL.
?

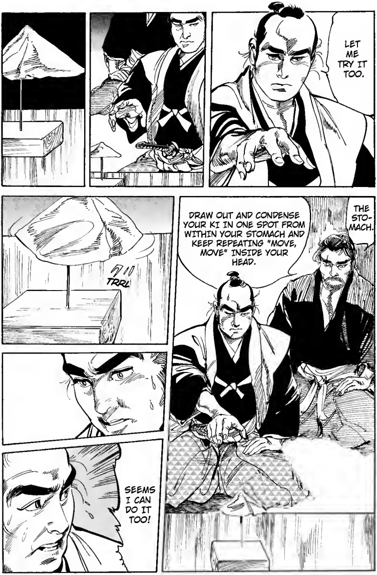
* A LONG NEEDLE USED IN MAKING TATAMI MATS.

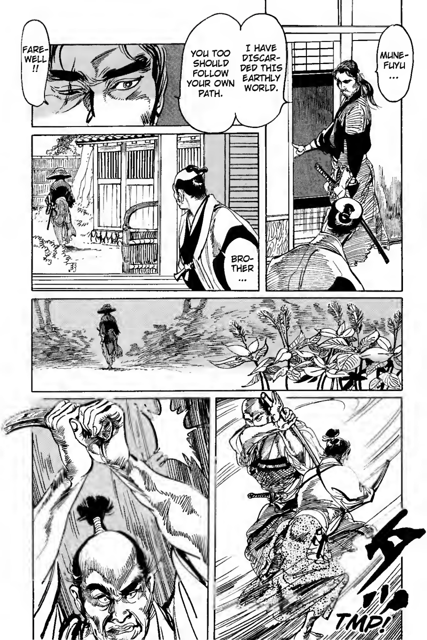

SILVER FOIL
WHAT IS THIS?
WATCH.
TRRRL
クルル クル
?!
ククルル
TRRRL
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?!

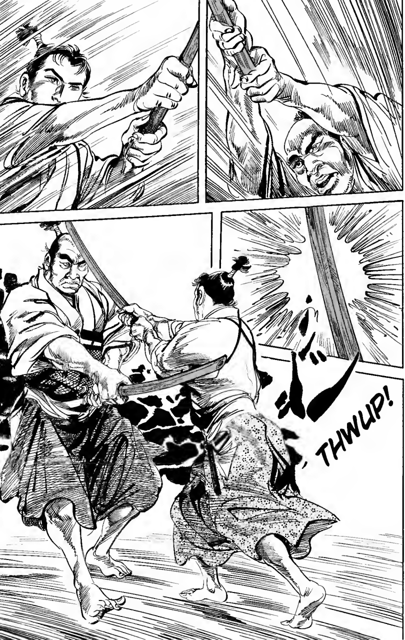

HOW?!
THE DOORS ARE CLOSED, THERE IS NO WIND HERE, AND YET...
IS THIS MAGIC, BROTHER?!
IT'S KI.*
KI ...
YOU MAY CALL IT A MAGNETIC SURGE ENDOWED UPON ALL LIVING THINGS.
THROUGH BREATHING EXERCISES AND FOCUSING YOUR MIND YOU CAN UNLEASH THE POWER OF THE KI BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION.
WITHOUT THE IDEA OF KI, IT IS NEAR IMPOSSIBLE TO WIN OVER A FORMIDABLE ENEMY.
THEN, CAN TOSHIKANE ...
DO THIS AS WELL?
TOSHIKANE POSSESSES AN ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE BEYOND COMPARE. IF HE TRIED IT HE WOULD SURELY HAVE NO TROUBLE MAKING THE FOIL SPIN.
TRRRL

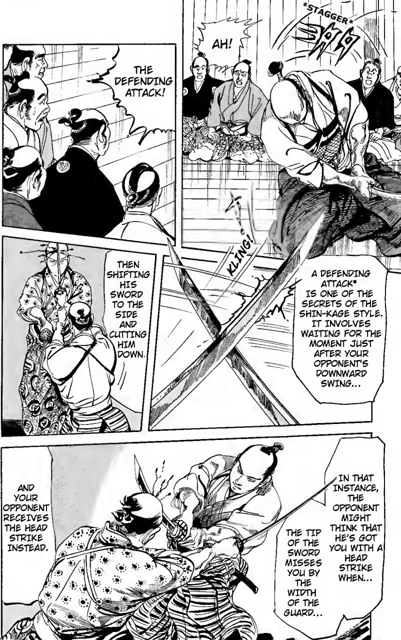
---

* LIFE ENERGY, LIFEFORCE, ENERGY FLOW.

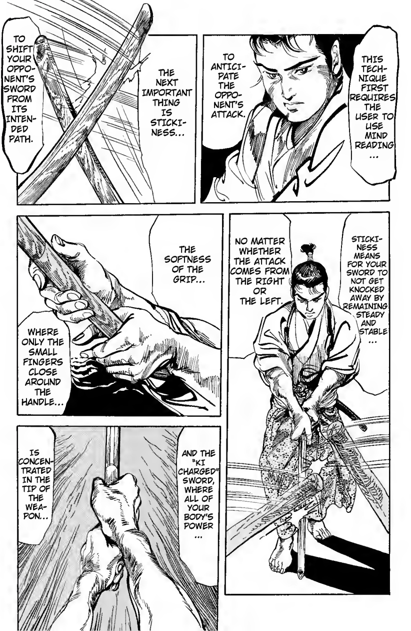

LET ME TRY IT TOO.
クル
TRRL
THE STOMACH.
DRAW OUT AND CONDENSE YOUR KI IN ONE SPOT FROM WITHIN YOUR STOMACH AND KEEP REPEATING "MOVE, MOVE" INSIDE YOUR HEAD.
SEEMS I CAN DO IT TOO!

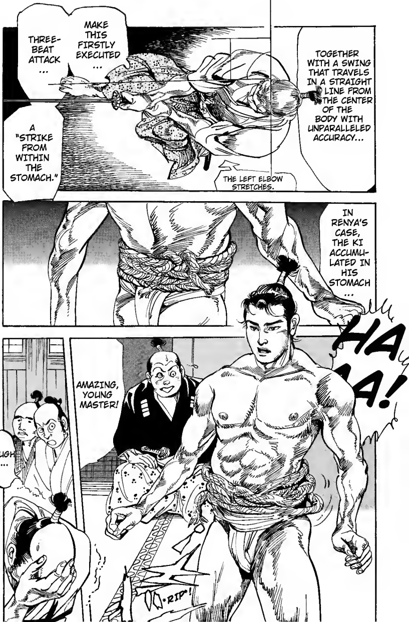

FAREWELL!!
I HAVE DISCARDED THIS EARTHLY WORLD.
YOU TOO SHOULD FOLLOW YOUR OWN PATH.
MUNEFUYU ...
BROTHER ...
TMP!

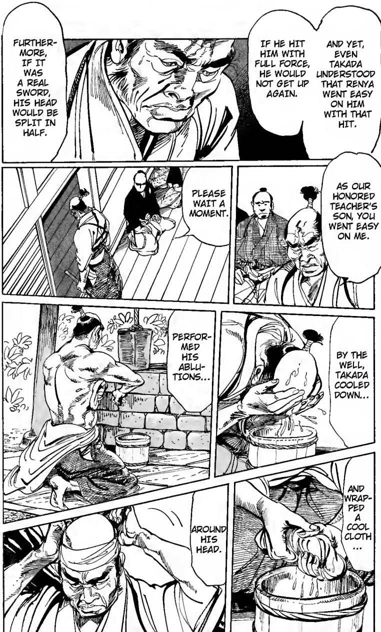

THWUP!

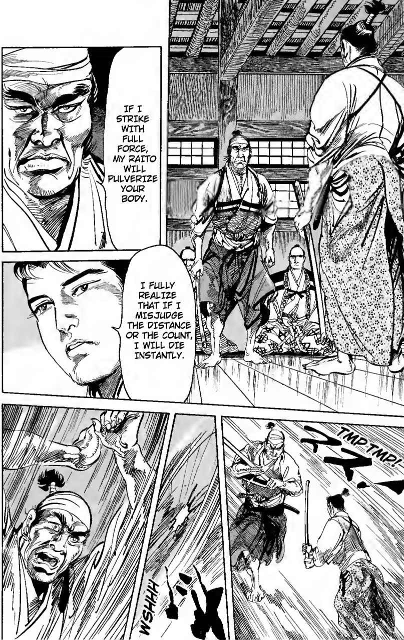

STAGGER
AH!
THE DEFENDING ATTACK!
KLING!
A DEFENDING ATTACK* IS ONE OF THE SECRETS OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE. IT INVOLVES WAITING FOR THE MOMENT JUST AFTER YOUR OPPONENT'S DOWNWARD SWING...
THEN SHIFTING HIS SWORD TO THE SIDE AND CUTTING HIM DOWN.
IN THAT INSTANCE, THE OPPONENT MIGHT THINK THAT HE'S GOT YOU WITH A HEAD STRIKE WHEN...
THE TIP OF THE SWORD MISSES YOU BY THE WIDTH OF THE GUARD...
AND YOUR OPPONENT RECEIVES THE HEAD STRIKE INSTEAD.

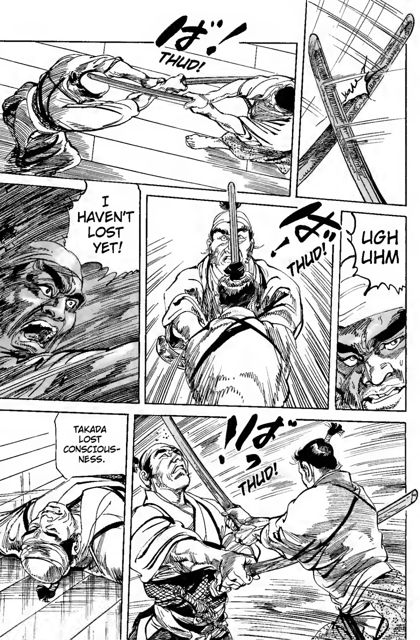
• IT'S WHAT MUSASHI MIYAMOTO REFERRED TO AS THE "SMACKING PARRY" IN HIS "THE BOOK OF FIVE RINGS."

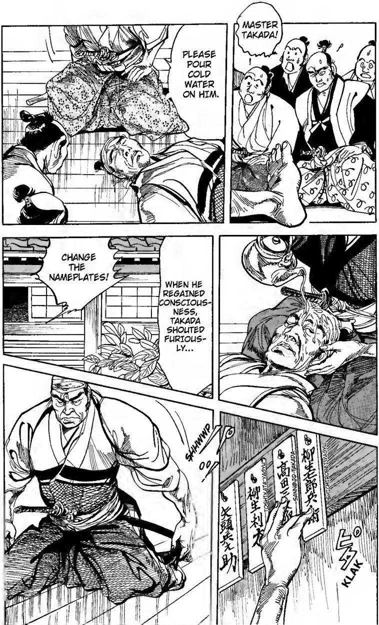

THIS TECHNIQUE FIRST REQUIRES THE USER TO USE MIND READING...
TO ANTICIPATE THE OPPONENT'S ATTACK.
TO SHIFT YOUR OPPONENT'S SWORD FROM ITS INTENDED PATH.
THE NEXT IMPORTANT THING IS STICKINESS...
STICKINESS MEANS FOR YOUR SWORD TO NOT GET KNOCKED AWAY BY REMAINING STEADY AND STABLE...
NO MATTER WHETHER THE ATTACK COMES FROM THE RIGHT OR THE LEFT.
THE SOFTNESS OF THE GRIP...
WHERE ONLY THE SMALL FINGERS CLOSE AROUND THE HANDLE...
AND THE "KI CHARGED" SWORD, WHERE ALL OF YOUR BODY'S POWER...
IS CONCENTRATED IN THE TIP OF THE WEAPON...

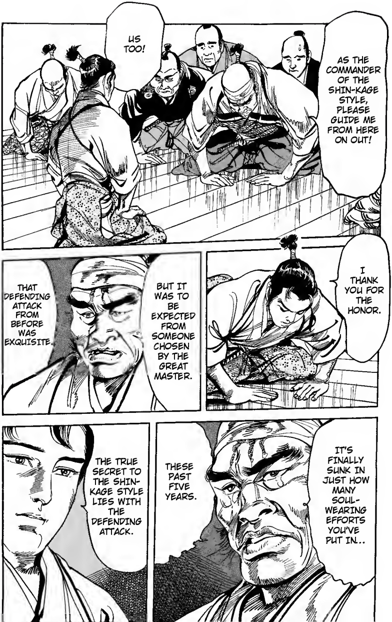

TOGETHER WITH A SWING THAT TRAVELS IN A STRAIGHT LINE FROM THE CENTER OF THE BODY WITH UNPARALLELED ACCURACY...
MAKE THIS FIRSTLY EXECUTED...
THREE-BEAT ATTACK...
A "STRIKE FROM WITHIN THE STOMACH."
THE LEFT ELBOW STRETCHES.
IN RENYA'S CASE, THE KI ACCUMULATED IN HIS STOMACH...
HAAA!
AMAZING, YOUNG MASTER!
UUGH...
RIP!

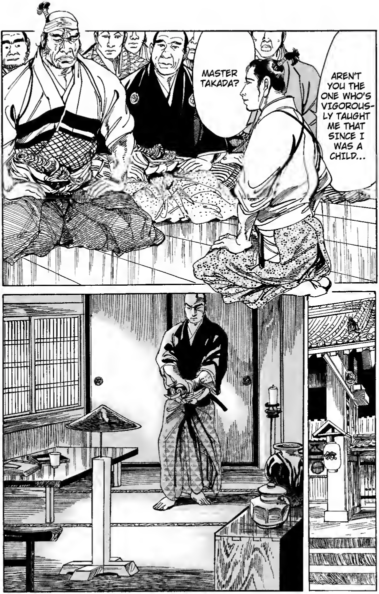

AND YET, EVEN TAKADA UNDERSTOOD THAT RENYA WENT EASY ON HIM WITH THAT HIT.
IF HE HIT HIM WITH FULL FORCE, HE WOULD NOT GET UP AGAIN.
FURTHERMORE, IF IT WAS A REAL SWORD, HIS HEAD WOULD BE SPLIT IN HALF.
AS OUR HONORED TEACHER'S SON, YOU WENT EASY ON ME.
PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT.
BY THE WELL, TAKADA COOLED DOWN...
PERFORMED HIS ABLUTIONS...
AND WRAPPED A COOL CLOTH...
AROUND HIS HEAD.

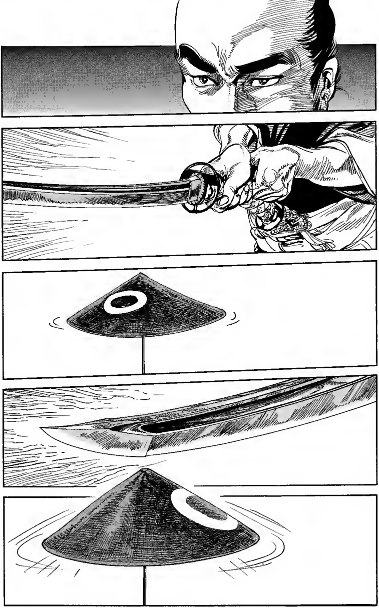

IF I STRIKE WITH FULL FORCE, MY RAITO WILL PULVERIZE YOUR BODY.
I FULLY REALIZE THAT IF I MISJUDGE THE DISTANCE OR THE COUNT, I WILL DIE INSTANTLY.
スス
TMP TMP!
WSHHH

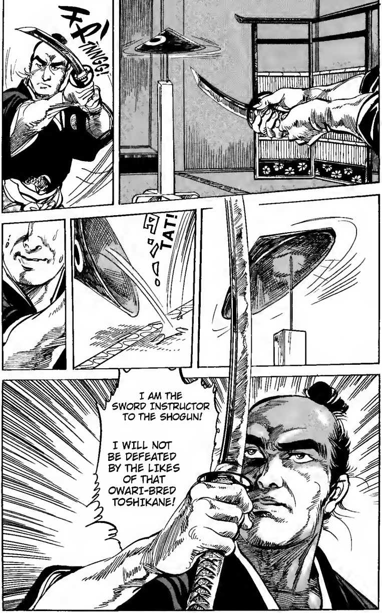

ば!
THUD!
UGH UHM
ぬ!
THUD!
I HAVEN'T LOST YET!
ばっ!!
THUD!
TAKADA LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.


MASTER TAKADA!
PLEASE POUR COLD WATER ON HIM.
WHEN HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, TAKADA SHOUTED FURIOUSLY...
CHANGE THE NAMEPLATES!
SHICHIROBEI-YAGYU
SANNOJO-TAKADA
TOSHIKATA-YAGYU
ピタ
KLAK
SHWWWP

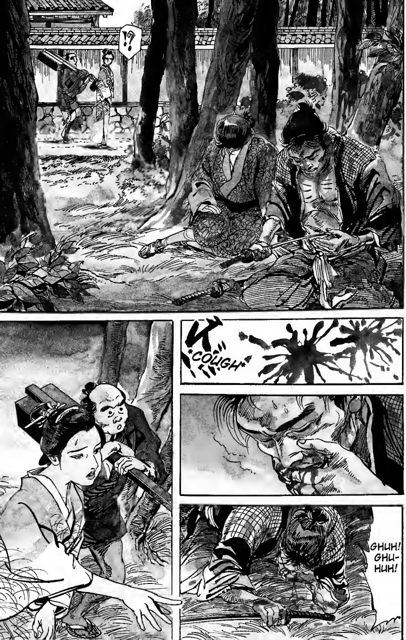

AS THE COMMANDER OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE, PLEASE GUIDE ME FROM HERE ON OUT!
US TOO!
I THANK YOU FOR THE HONOR.
THAT DEFENDING ATTACK FROM BEFORE WAS EXQUISITE.
BUT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED FROM SOMEONE CHOSEN BY THE GREAT MASTER.
IT'S FINALLY SUNK IN JUST HOW MANY SOUL-WEARING EFFORTS YOU'VE PUT IN...
THESE PAST FIVE YEARS.
THE TRUE SECRET TO THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE LIES WITH THE DEFENDING ATTACK.


MASTER TAKADA?
AREN'T YOU THE ONE WHO'S VIGOROUSLY TAUGHT ME THAT SINCE I WAS A CHILD...



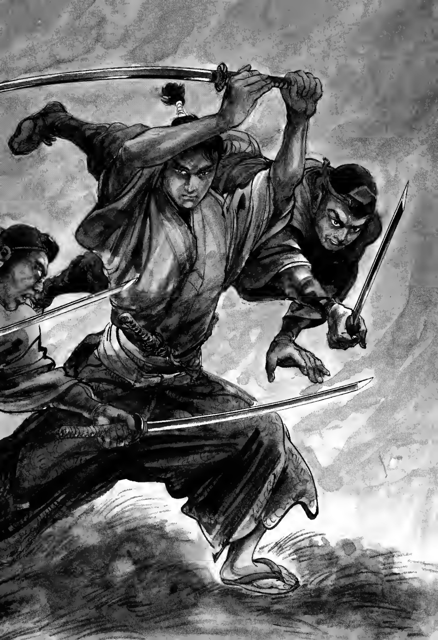

チャ!
TINGG!
タッ
TAT!
I AM THE SWORD INSTRUCTOR TO THE SHOGUN!
I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED BY THE LIKES OF THAT OWARI-BRED TOSHIKANE!

●[第十六話] 完●
CHAPTER 16 - FIN


!?
K *COUGH*
GHUH! GHU-HUH!

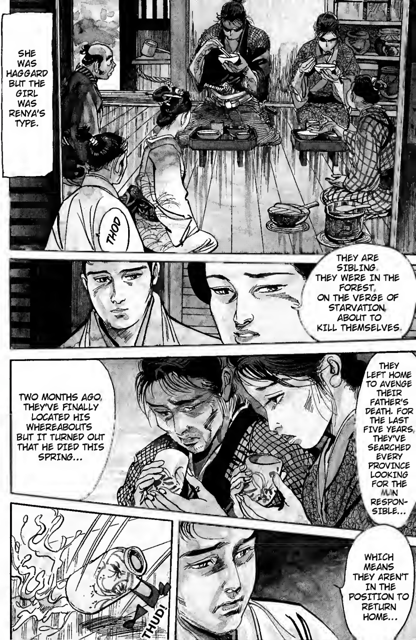
[第十七話]熱き血潮

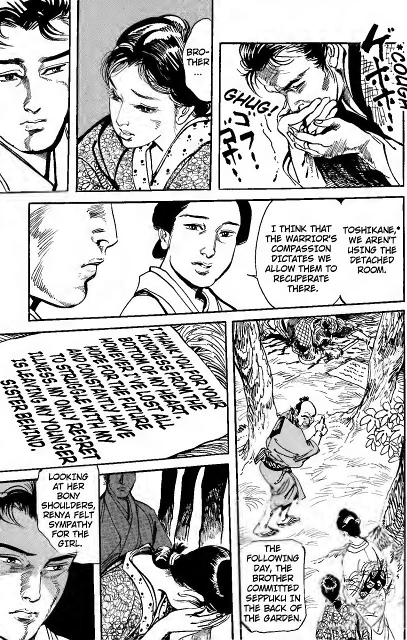
CHAPTER 17: THE HOT RIVER OF BLOOD



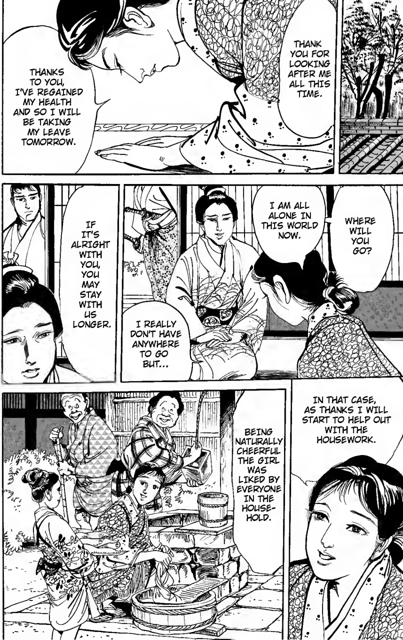
[第十七話]熱き血潮

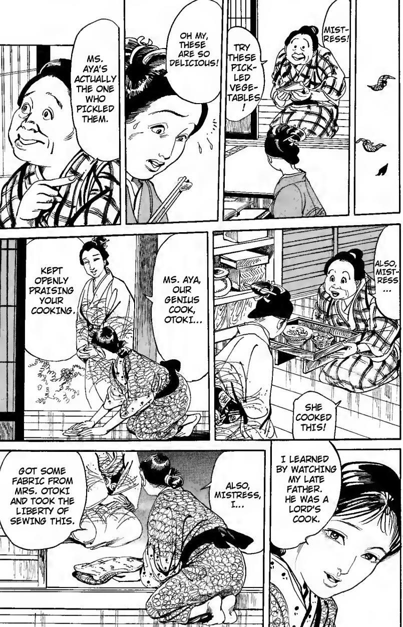
CHAPTER 17: THE HOT RIVER OF BLOOD

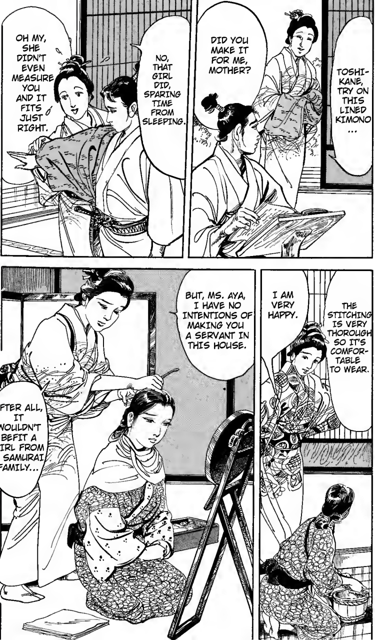

SHE WAS HAGGARD BUT THE GIRL WAS RENYA'S TYPE.
THOD
THEY ARE SIBLING. THEY WERE IN THE FOREST, ON THE VERGE OF STARVATION, ABOUT TO KILL THEMSELVES.
THEY LEFT HOME TO AVENGE THEIR FATHER'S DEATH. FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS, THEY'VE SEARCHED EVERY PROVINCE LOOKING FOR THE MAIN RESPONSIBLE...
TWO MONTHS AGO, THEY'VE FINALLY LOCATED HIS WHEREABOUTS BUT IT TURNED OUT THAT HE DIED THIS SPRING...
WHICH MEANS THEY AREN'T IN THE POSITION TO RETURN HOME...
THUD!

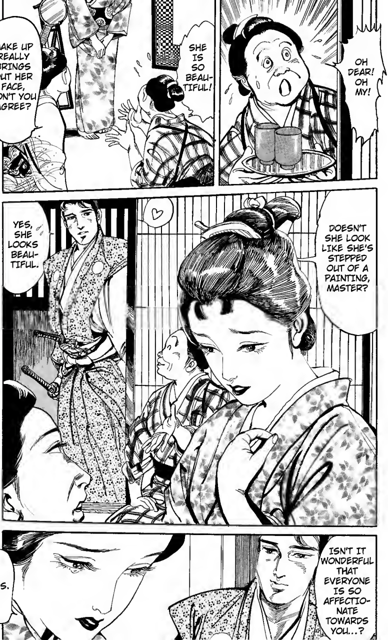

ゲホホ…!
COUGH
ゴフ…! ゴホ…!
GHUG!
BROTHER…
TOSHIKANE,* WE AREN'T USING THE DETACHED ROOM.
I THINK THAT THE WARRIOR'S COMPASSION DICTATES WE ALLOW THEM TO RECUPERATE THERE.
THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE BROTHER COMMITTED SEPPUKU IN THE BACK OF THE GARDEN.
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART. HOWEVER I'VE LOST ALL HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND CONSTANTLY HAVE TO STRUGGLE WITH MY ILLNESS. MY ONLY REGRET IS LEAVING MY YOUNGER SISTER BEHIND.
LOOKING AT HER BONY SHOULDERS, RENYA FELT SYMPATHY FOR THE GIRL.

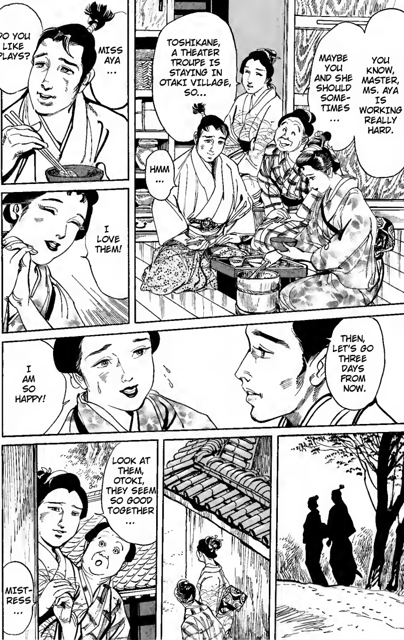
* LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI.

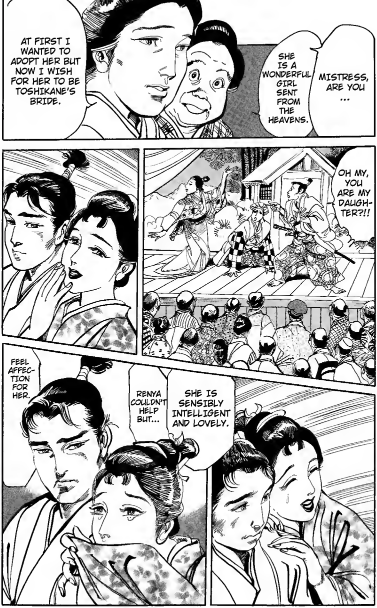

THANK YOU FOR LOOKING AFTER ME ALL THIS TIME.
THANKS TO YOU, I'VE REGAINED MY HEALTH AND SO I WILL BE TAKING MY LEAVE TOMORROW.
WHERE WILL YOU GO?
I AM ALL ALONE IN THIS WORLD NOW.
I REALLY DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO BUT...
IF IT'S ALRIGHT WITH YOU, YOU MAY STAY WITH US LONGER.
IN THAT CASE, AS THANKS I WILL START TO HELP OUT WITH THE HOUSEWORK.
BEING NATURALLY CHEERFUL THE GIRL WAS LIKED BY EVERYONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

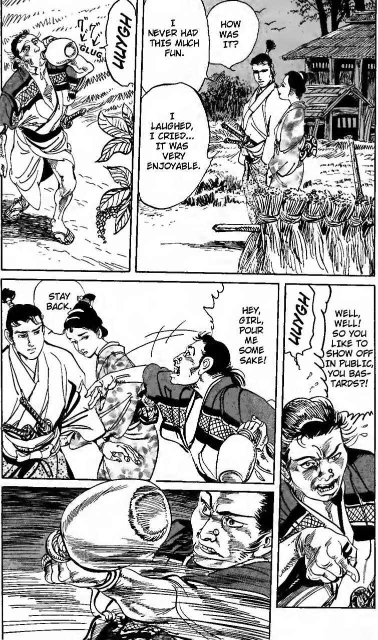

MIST-RESS!
TRY THESE PICKLED VEGETABLES!
OH MY, THESE ARE SO DELICIOUS!
MS. AYA'S ACTUALLY THE ONE WHO PICKLED THEM.
ALSO, MISTRESS...
SHE COOKED THIS!
MS. AYA, OUR GENIUS COOK, OTOKI...
KEPT OPENLY PRAISING YOUR COOKING.
I LEARNED BY WATCHING MY LATE FATHER. HE WAS A LORD'S COOK.
ALSO, MISTRESS, I...
GOT SOME FABRIC FROM MRS. OTOKI AND TOOK THE LIBERTY OF SEWING THIS.

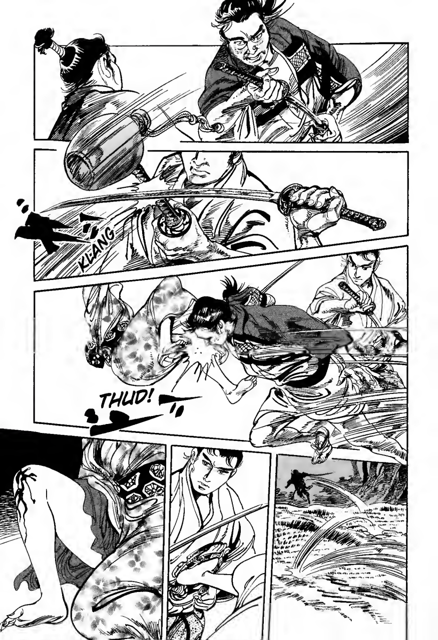

TOSHIKANE, TRY ON THIS LINED KIMONO...
DID YOU MAKE IT FOR ME, MOTHER?
NO, THAT GIRL DID, SPARING TIME FROM SLEEPING.
OH MY, SHE DIDN'T EVEN MEASURE YOU AND IT FITS JUST RIGHT.
THE STITCHING IS VERY THOROUGH SO IT'S COMFORTABLE TO WEAR.
I AM VERY HAPPY.
BUT, MS. AYA, I HAVE NO INTENTIONS OF MAKING YOU A SERVANT IN THIS HOUSE.
AFTER ALL, IT WOULDN'T BEFIT A GIRL FROM A SAMURAI FAMILY...

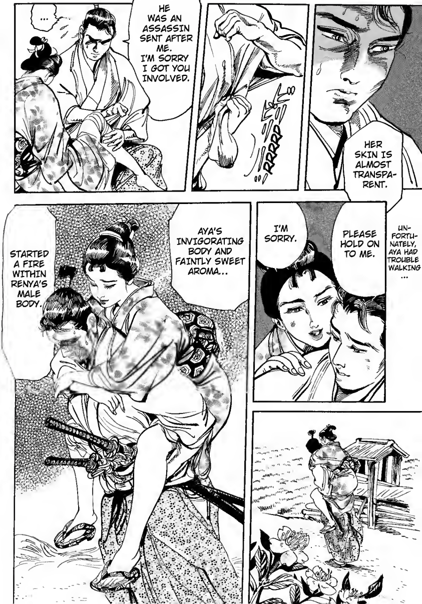

OH DEAR! OH MY!
SHE IS SO BEAUTIFUL!
MAKE UP REALLY BRINGS OUT HER FACE, DON'T YOU AGREE?
DOESN'T SHE LOOK LIKE SHE'S STEPPED OUT OF A PAINTING, MASTER?
♡
YES, SHE LOOKS BEAUTIFUL.
ISN'T IT WONDERFUL THAT EVERYONE IS SO AFFECTIONATE TOWARDS YOU...?
YES.

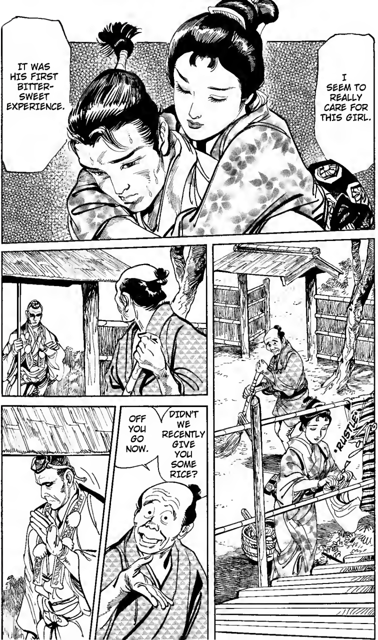

TOSHIKANE, A THEATER TROUPE IS STAYING IN OTAKI VILLAGE, SO...
YOU KNOW, MASTER, MS. AYA IS WORKING REALLY HARD.
MAYBE YOU AND SHE SHOULD SOMETIMES ...
HMM ...
MISS AYA ...
DO YOU LIKE PLAYS?
I LOVE THEM!
THEN, LET'S GO THREE DAYS FROM NOW.
I AM SO HAPPY!
LOOK AT THEM, OTOKI, THEY SEEM SO GOOD TOGETHER ...
MISTRESS ...

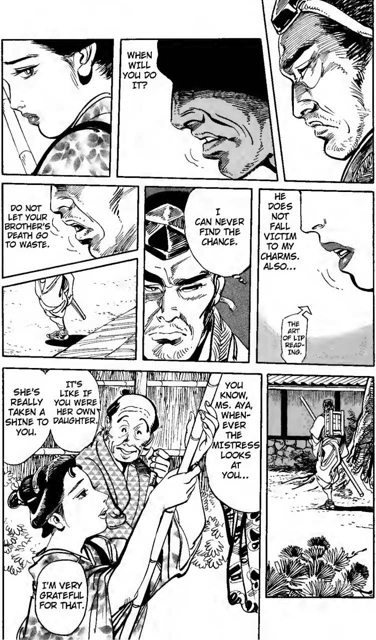

MISTRESS, ARE YOU ...
SHE IS A WONDERFUL GIRL SENT FROM THE HEAVENS.
AT FIRST I WANTED TO ADOPT HER BUT NOW I WISH FOR HER TO BE TOSHIKANE'S BRIDE.
OH MY, YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER?!!
SHE IS SENSIBLY INTELLIGENT AND LOVELY.
RENYA COULDN'T HELP BUT...
FEEL AFFECTION FOR HER.

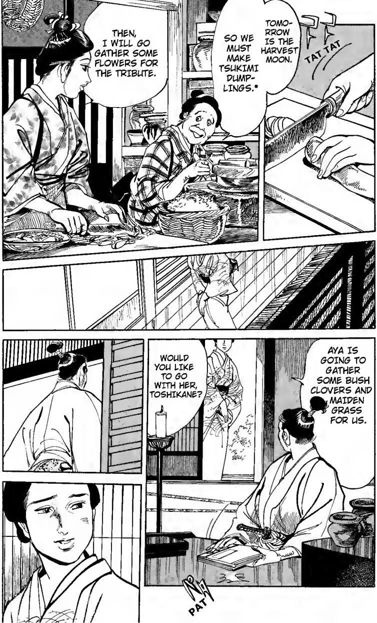

HOW WAS IT?
I NEVER HAD THIS MUCH FUN.
I LAUGHED, I CRIED... IT WAS VERY ENJOYABLE.
GLUG
UUYGH
UUYGH
WELL, WELL! SO YOU LIKE TO SHOW OFF IN PUBLIC, YOU BASTARDS?!
HEY, GIRL, POUR ME SOME SAKE!
STAY BACK.


KLANG
THUD!


HER SKIN IS ALMOST TRANSPARENT.
RRRRP
...
HE WAS AN ASSASSIN SENT AFTER ME. I'M SORRY I GOT YOU INVOLVED.
UNFORTUNATELY, AYA HAD TROUBLE WALKING...
PLEASE HOLD ON TO ME.
I'M SORRY.
AYA'S INVIGORATING BODY AND FAINTLY SWEET AROMA...
STARTED A FIRE WITHIN RENYA'S MALE BODY.

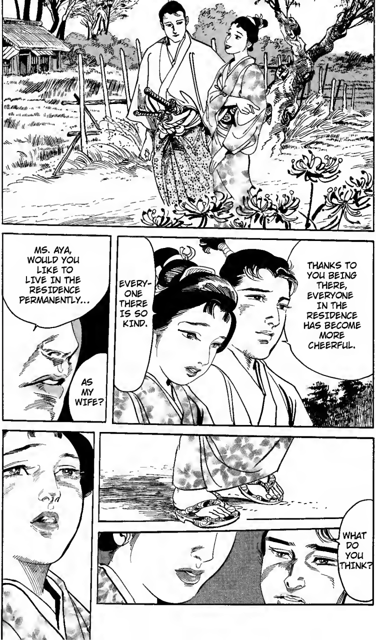

I SEEM TO REALLY CARE FOR THIS GIRL.
IT WAS HIS FIRST BITTER-SWEET EXPERIENCE.
RUSTLE
DIDN'T WE RECENTLY GIVE YOU SOME RICE?
OFF YOU GO NOW.

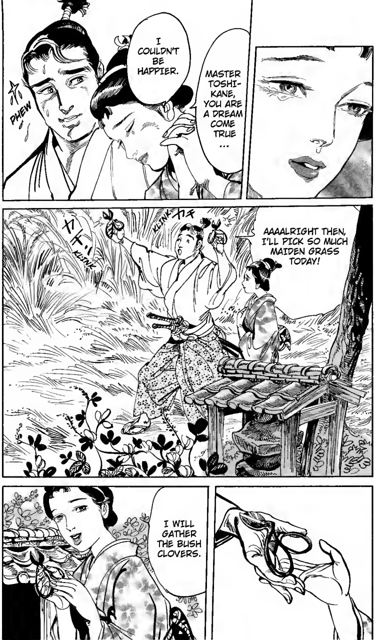

WHEN WILL YOU DO IT?
HE DOES NOT FALL VICTIM TO MY CHARMS. ALSO...
THE ART OF LIP READING.
I CAN NEVER FIND THE CHANCE.
DO NOT LET YOUR BROTHER'S DEATH GO TO WASTE.
YOU KNOW, MS. AYA, WHENEVER THE MISTRESS LOOKS AT YOU...
IT'S LIKE IF YOU WERE HER OWN DAUGHTER.
SHE'S REALLY TAKEN A SHINE TO YOU.
I'M VERY GRATEFUL FOR THAT.

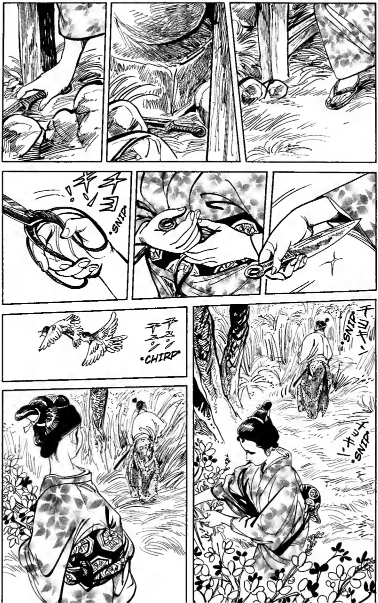

TOMORROW IS THE HARVEST MOON.
SO WE MUST MAKE TSUKIMI DUMPLINGS.*
THEN, I WILL GO GATHER SOME FLOWERS FOR THE TRIBUTE.
TAT TAT
AYA IS GOING TO GATHER SOME BUSH CLOVERS AND MAIDEN GRASS FOR US.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO WITH HER, TOSHIKANE?
PAT

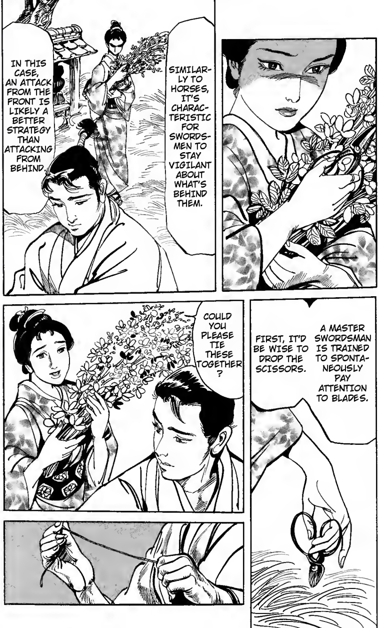
---

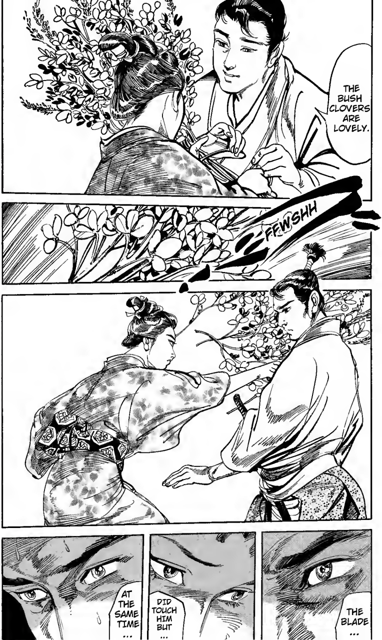
* LITERALLY "MOON WATCHING DUMPLINGS," SERVED DURING THE JAPANESE FESTIVALS HONORING THE AUTUMN MOON

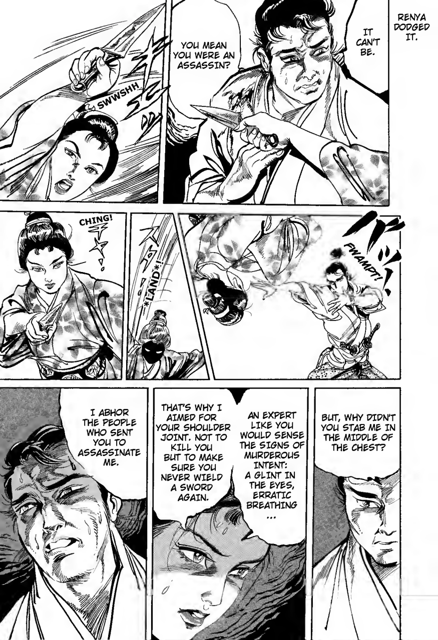

THANKS TO YOU BEING THERE, EVERYONE IN THE RESIDENCE HAS BECOME MORE CHEERFUL.
EVERYONE THERE IS SO KIND.
MS. AYA, WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE IN THE RESIDENCE PERMANENTLY...
AS MY WIFE?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

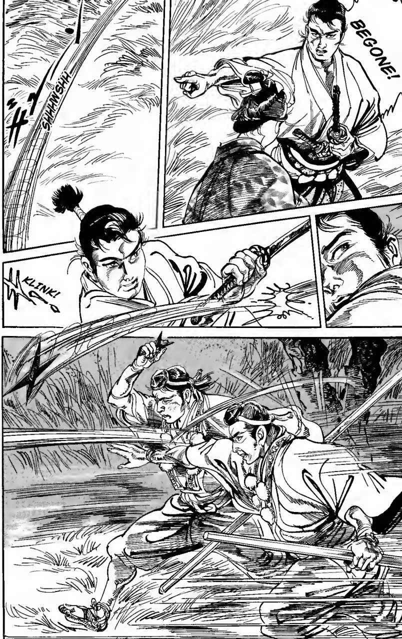

MASTER TOSHIKANE, YOU ARE A DREAM COME TRUE ...
I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER.
PHEW
AAAALRIGHT THEN, I'LL PICK SO MUCH MAIDEN GRASS TODAY!
KLINK カチ
カチ KLINK
I WILL GATHER THE BUSH CLOVERS.

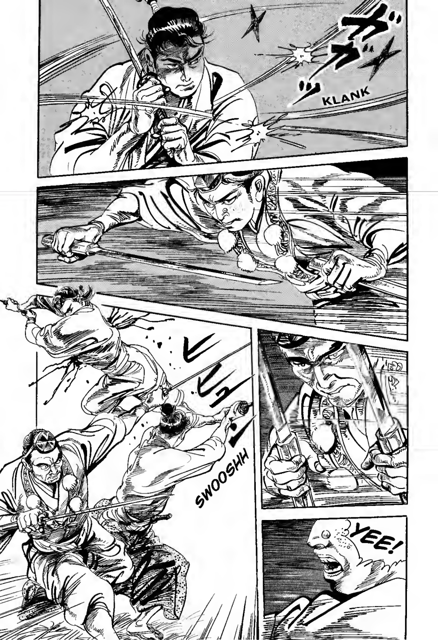

チョキン!
SNIP
チュン
チュン
CHIRP
チョキン
SNIP
チョキ!
SNIP

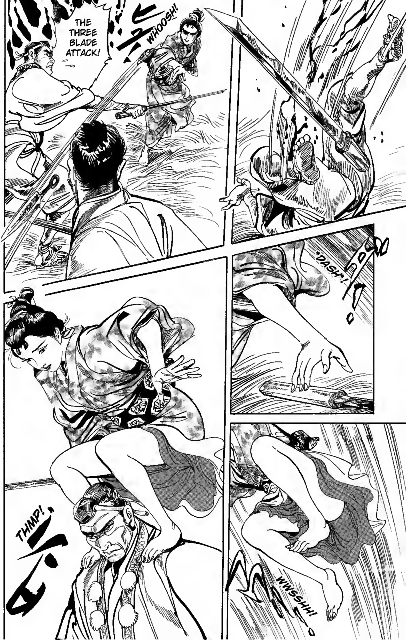

SIMILARLY TO HORSES, IT'S CHARACTERISTIC FOR SWORDSMEN TO STAY VIGILANT ABOUT WHAT'S BEHIND THEM.
IN THIS CASE, AN ATTACK FROM THE FRONT IS LIKELY A BETTER STRATEGY THAN ATTACKING FROM BEHIND.
A MASTER SWORDSMAN IS TRAINED TO SPONTANEOUSLY PAY ATTENTION TO BLADES.
FIRST, IT'D BE WISE TO DROP THE SCISSORS.
COULD YOU PLEASE TIE THESE TOGETHER?

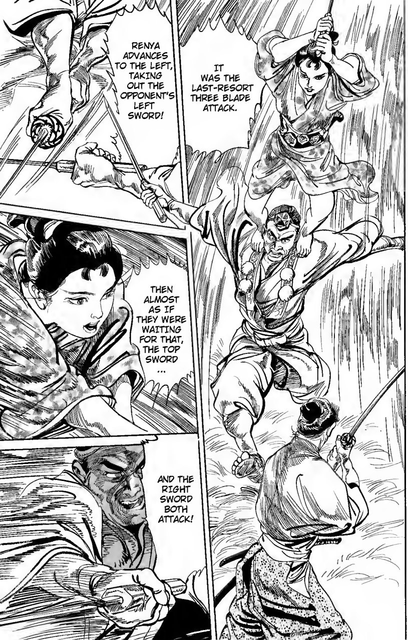

THE BUSH CLOVERS ARE LOVELY.
FFWSHH
THE BLADE ...
DID TOUCH HIM BUT ...
AT THE SAME TIME ...

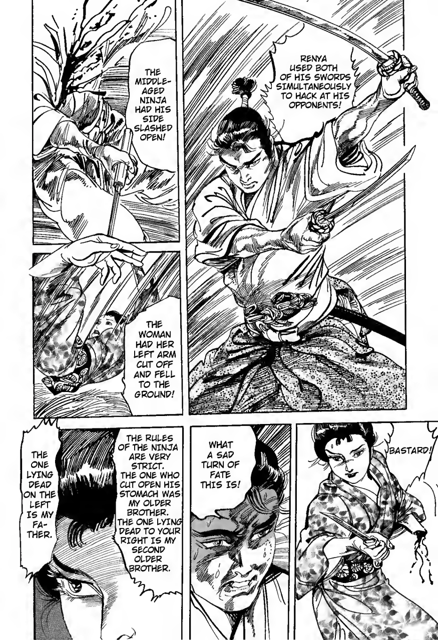

RENYA DODGED IT.
IT CAN'T BE.
YOU MEAN YOU WERE AN ASSASSIN?
SWWSHH
FWAMPT!
LAND!
CHING!
BUT, WHY DIDN'T YOU STAB ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHEST?
AN EXPERT LIKE YOU WOULD SENSE THE SIGNS OF MURDEROUS INTENT: A GLINT IN THE EYES, ERRATIC BREATHING ...
THAT'S WHY I AIMED FOR YOUR SHOULDER JOINT. NOT TO KILL YOU BUT TO MAKE SURE YOU NEVER WIELD A SWORD AGAIN.
I ABHOR THE PEOPLE WHO SENT YOU TO ASSASSINATE ME.

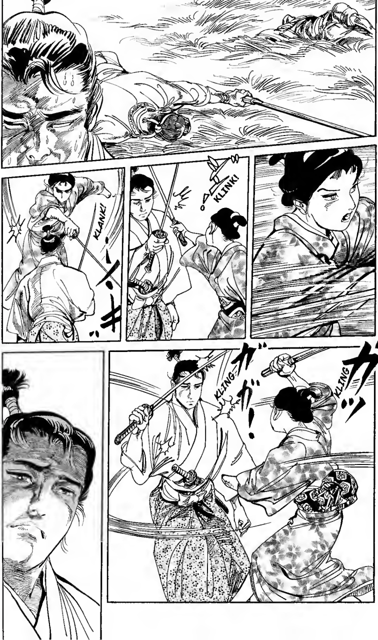

BEGONE!
SHHHNSHH
KLINK!

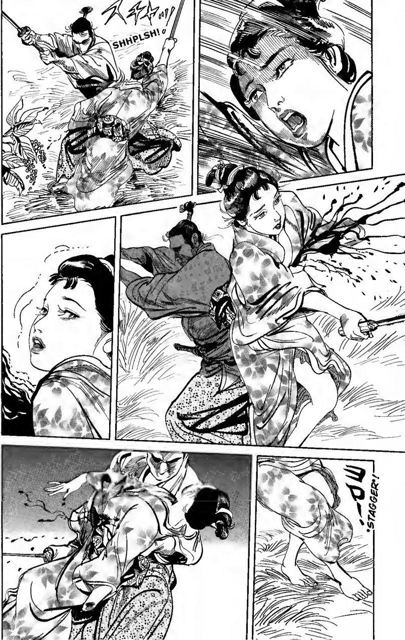

ガガッ
KLANK
YEE!
ヒュッ
SWOOSHH

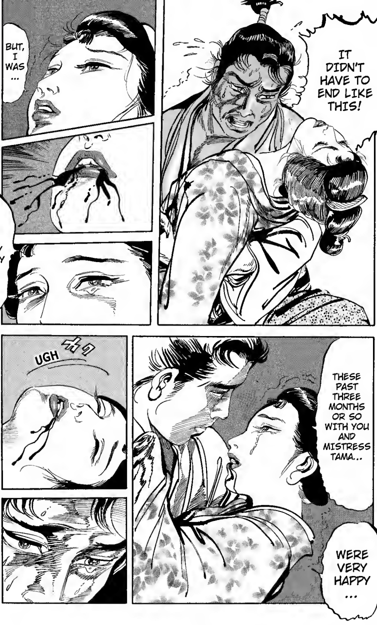

THE THREE BLADE ATTACK!
WHOOSH!
'DASH'!
WWSSHH!
THMP!

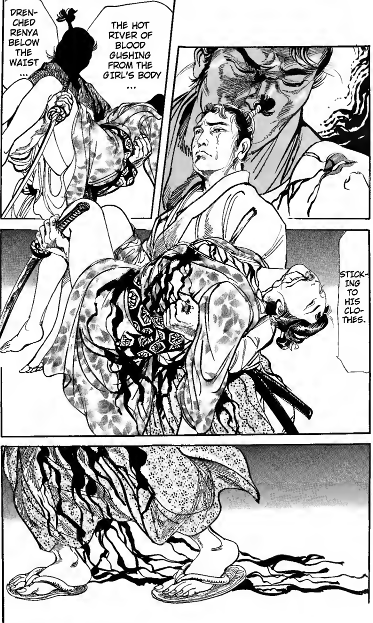

IT WAS THE LAST-RESORT THREE BLADE ATTACK.
RENYA ADVANCES TO THE LEFT, TAKING OUT THE OPPONENT'S LEFT SWORD!
THEN ALMOST AS IF THEY WERE WAITING FOR THAT, THE TOP SWORD ...
AND THE RIGHT SWORD BOTH ATTACK!


RENYA USED BOTH OF HIS SWORDS SIMULTANEOUSLY TO HACK AT HIS OPPONENTS!
THE MIDDLE-AGED NINJA HAD HIS SIDE SLASHED OPEN!
THE WOMAN HAD HER LEFT ARM CUT OFF AND FELL TO THE GROUND!
BASTARD!
WHAT A SAD TURN OF FATE THIS IS!
THE RULES OF THE NINJA ARE VERY STRICT. THE ONE WHO CUT OPEN HIS STOMACH WAS MY OLDER BROTHER. THE ONE LYING DEAD TO YOUR RIGHT IS MY SECOND OLDER BROTHER.
THE ONE LYING DEAD ON THE LEFT IS MY FATHER.


KLANK!
KLINK!
KLING
ガガ!
KLING
ガッ


スチャッ!!
SHHPLSH!
ヨロ一
STAGGER!


IT DIDN'T HAVE TO END LIKE THIS!
BUT, I WAS...
I WAS VERY HAPPY...
THESE PAST THREE MONTHS OR SO WITH YOU AND MISTRESS TAMA...
WERE VERY HAPPY...
UGH ガク

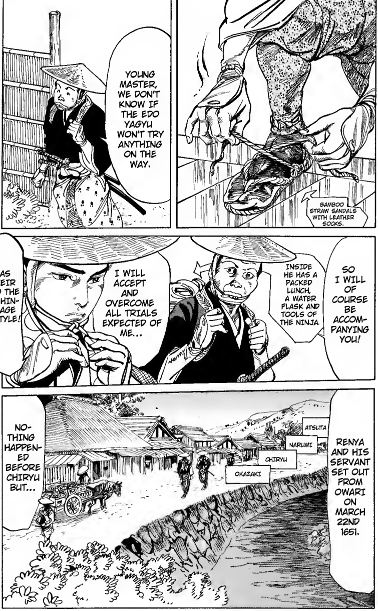

THE HOT RIVER OF BLOOD GUSHING FROM THE GIRL'S BODY ...
DRENCHED RENYA BELOW THE WAIST ...
STICKING TO HIS CLOTHES.

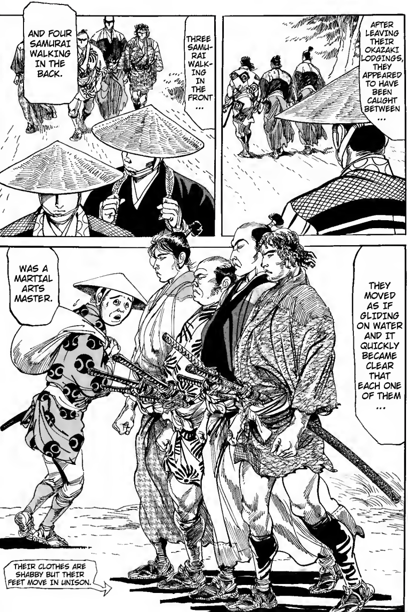
●［第十七話］完●

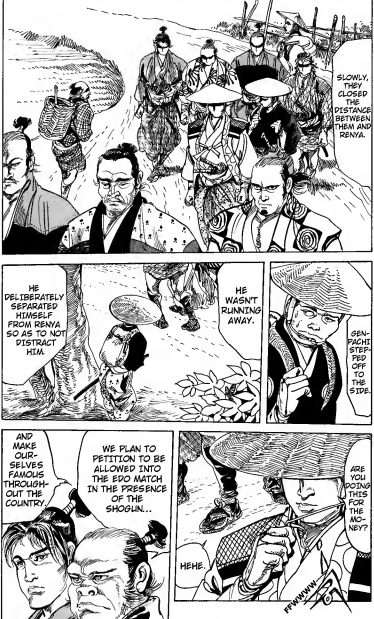
CHAPTER 17 - FIN

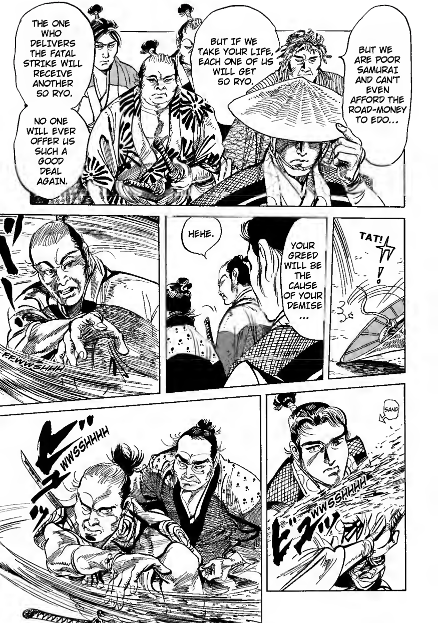
CHAPTER 18: CAPTURE

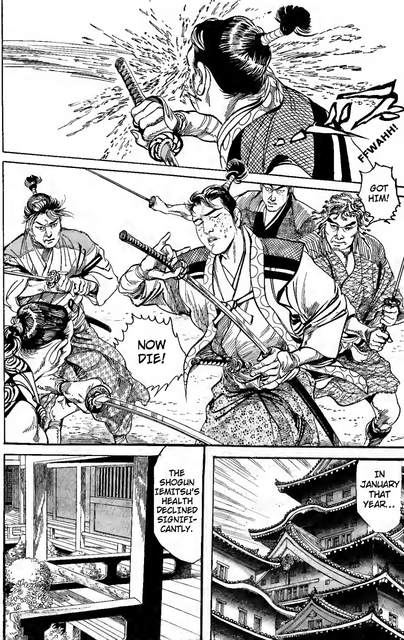
「第十八話」受取（うけとり）

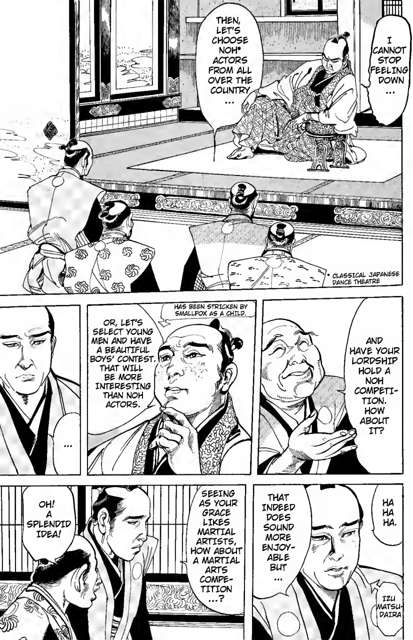

BAMBOO STRAW SANDALS WITH LEATHER SOCKS.
YOUNG MASTER, WE DON'T KNOW IF THE EDO YAGYU WON'T TRY ANYTHING ON THE WAY.
SO I WILL OF COURSE BE ACCOMPANYING YOU!
INSIDE HE HAS A PACKED LUNCH, A WATER FLASK AND TOOLS OF THE NINJA.
I WILL ACCEPT AND OVERCOME ALL TRIALS EXPECTED OF ME...
AS HEIR TO THE SHINKAGE STYLE!
RENYA AND HIS SERVANT SET OUT FROM OWARI ON MARCH 22ND 1651.
ATSUTA
NARUMI
CHIRYU
OKAZAKI
NOTHING HAPPENED BEFORE CHIRYU BUT...


AFTER LEAVING THEIR OKAZAKI LODGINGS, THEY APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT BETWEEN ...
THREE SAMURAI WALKING IN THE FRONT ...
AND FOUR SAMURAI WALKING IN THE BACK.
THEY MOVED AS IF GLIDING ON WATER AND IT QUICKLY BECAME CLEAR THAT EACH ONE OF THEM ...
WAS A MARTIAL ARTS MASTER.
THEIR CLOTHES ARE SHABBY BUT THEIR FEET MOVE IN UNISON.

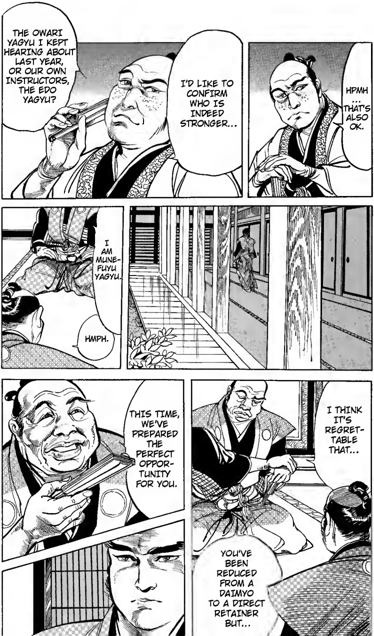

SLOWLY, THEY CLOSED THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM AND RENYA.
GENPACHI STEPPED OFF TO THE SIDE.
HE WASN'T RUNNING AWAY.
HE DELIBERATELY SEPARATED HIMSELF FROM RENYA SO AS TO NOT DISTRACT HIM.
ARE YOU DOING THIS FOR THE MONEY?
HEHE.
FFWWWW
WE PLAN TO PETITION TO BE ALLOWED INTO THE EDO MATCH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SHOGUN...
AND MAKE OURSELVES FAMOUS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

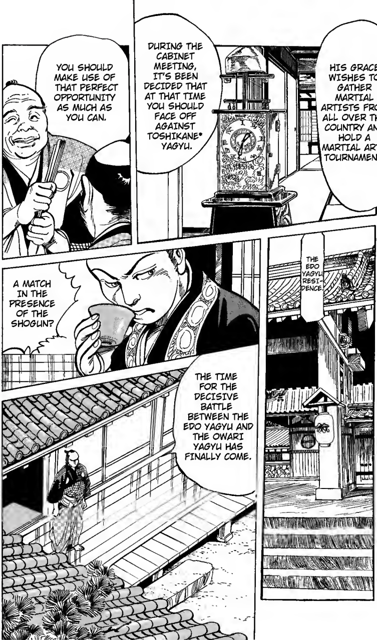

BUT WE ARE POOR SAMURAI AND CAN'T EVEN AFFORD THE ROAD-MONEY TO EDO...
BUT IF WE TAKE YOUR LIFE, EACH ONE OF US WILL GET 50 RYO.
THE ONE WHO DELIVERS THE FATAL STRIKE WILL RECEIVE ANOTHER 50 RYO.
NO ONE WILL EVER OFFER US SUCH A GOOD DEAL AGAIN.
TAT!
HEHE.
YOUR GREED WILL BE THE CAUSE OF YOUR DEMISE ...
FFWWSHHH
SAND
WWSSHHHH
WWSSHHHH


FFWAHH!
GOT HIM!
NOW DIE!
IN JANUARY THAT YEAR...
THE SHOGUN IEMITSU'S HEALTH DECLINED SIGNIFICANTLY.

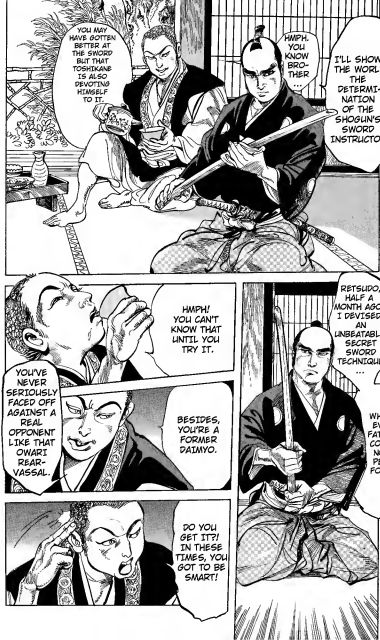

I CANNOT STOP FEELING DOWN ...
THEN, LET'S CHOOSE NOH* ACTORS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ...
AND HAVE YOUR LORDSHIP HOLD A NOH COMPETITION. HOW ABOUT IT?
HAS BEEN STRICKEN BY SMALLPOX AS A CHILD.
OR, LET'S SELECT YOUNG MEN AND HAVE A BEAUTIFUL BOYS' CONTEST. THAT WILL BE MORE INTERESTING THAN NOH ACTORS.
...
HA HA HA.
IZU MATSUDAIRA
THAT INDEED DOES SOUND MORE ENJOYABLE BUT ...
SEEING AS YOUR GRACE LIKES MARTIAL ARTISTS, HOW ABOUT A MARTIAL ARTS COMPETITION ...?
OH! A SPLENDID IDEA!

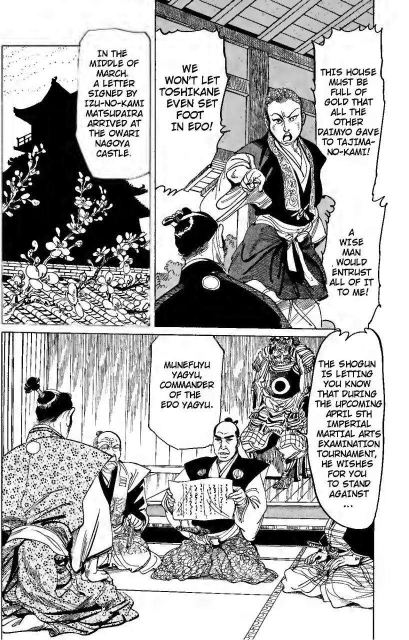
* CLASSICAL JAPANESE DANCE THEATRE

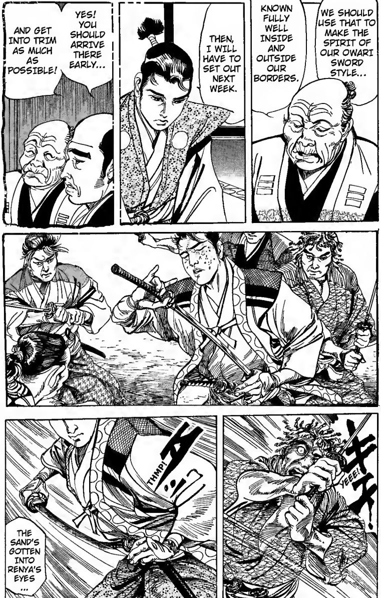

THE OWARI YAGYU I KEPT HEARING ABOUT LAST YEAR, OR OUR OWN INSTRUCTORS, THE EDO YAGYU?
I'D LIKE TO CONFIRM WHO IS INDEED STRONGER...
HPMH... THAT'S ALSO OK.
I AM MUNEFUYU YAGYU.
HMPH.
THIS TIME, WE'VE PREPARED THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU.
I THINK IT'S REGRETTABLE THAT...
YOU'VE BEEN REDUCED FROM A DAIMYO TO A DIRECT RETAINER BUT...

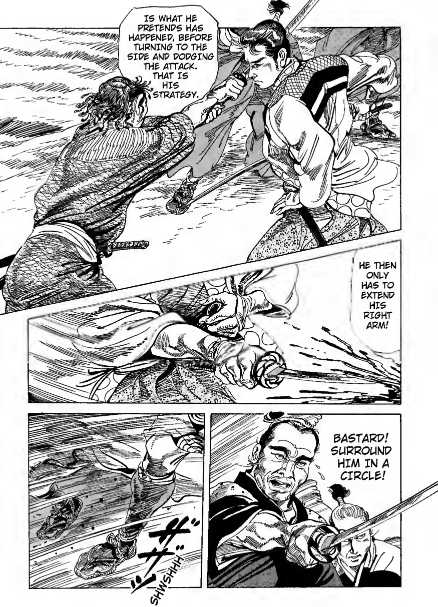

HIS GRACE WISHES TO GATHER MARTIAL ARTISTS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND HOLD A MARTIAL ARTS TOURNAMENT.
DURING THE CABINET MEETING, IT'S BEEN DECIDED THAT AT THAT TIME YOU SHOULD FACE OFF AGAINST TOSHIKANE* YAGYU.
YOU SHOULD MAKE USE OF THAT PERFECT OPPORTUNITY AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.
THE EDO YAGYU RESIDENCE.
A MATCH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SHOGUN?
THE TIME FOR THE DECISIVE BATTLE BETWEEN THE EDO YAGYU AND THE OWARI YAGYU HAS FINALLY COME.

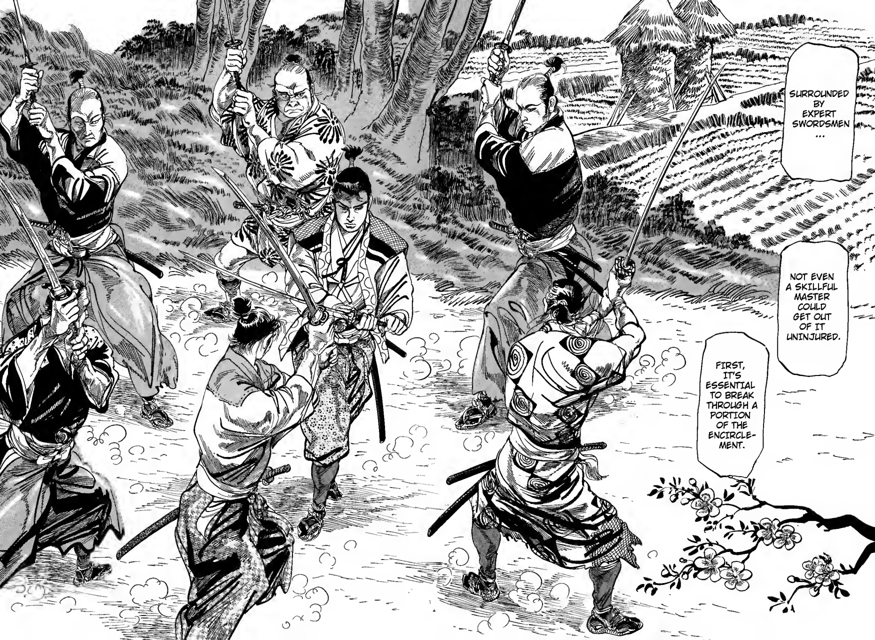
* LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI.

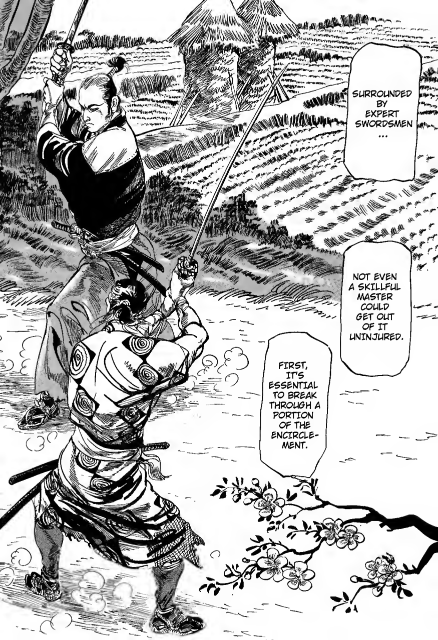

YOU MAY HAVE GOTTEN BETTER AT THE SWORD BUT THAT TOSHIKANE IS ALSO DEVOTING HIMSELF TO IT.
HMPH. YOU KNOW BROTHER ...
I'LL SHOW THE WORLD THE DETERMINATION OF THE SHOGUN'S SWORD INSTRUCTOR.
RETSUDO, HALF A MONTH AGO, I DEVISED AN UNBEATABLE, SECRET SWORD TECHNIQUE ...
WHICH EVEN FATHER COULD NOT PERFORM.
HMPH! YOU CAN'T KNOW THAT UNTIL YOU TRY IT.
YOU'VE NEVER SERIOUSLY FACED OFF AGAINST A REAL OPPONENT LIKE THAT OWARI REAR-VASSAL.
BESIDES, YOU'RE A FORMER DAIMYO.
DO YOU GET IT?! IN THESE TIMES, YOU GOT TO BE SMART!


IN THE MIDDLE OF MARCH, A LETTER SIGNED BY IZU-NO-KAMI MATSUDAIRA ARRIVED AT THE OWARI NAGOYA CASTLE.
WE WON'T LET TOSHIKANE EVEN SET FOOT IN EDO!
THIS HOUSE MUST BE FULL OF GOLD THAT ALL THE OTHER DAIMYO GAVE TO TAJIMA-NO-KAMI!
A WISE MAN WOULD ENTRUST ALL OF IT TO ME!
MUNEFUYU YAGYU, COMMANDER OF THE EDO YAGYU.
THE SHOGUN IS LETTING YOU KNOW THAT DURING THE UPCOMING APRIL 5TH IMPERIAL MARTIAL ARTS EXAMINATION TOURNAMENT, HE WISHES FOR YOU TO STAND AGAINST ...


WE SHOULD USE THAT TO MAKE THE SPIRIT OF OUR OWARI SWORD STYLE...
KNOWN FULLY WELL INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OUR BORDERS.
THEN, I WILL HAVE TO SET OUT NEXT WEEK.
YES! YOU SHOULD ARRIVE THERE EARLY...
AND GET INTO TRIM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!
キキ
YEEE!
ダッ
THMP!
THE SAND'S GOTTEN INTO RENYA'S EYES ...


IS WHAT HE PRETENDS HAS HAPPENED, BEFORE TURNING TO THE SIDE AND DODGING THE ATTACK. THAT IS HIS STRATEGY.
HE THEN ONLY HAS TO EXTEND HIS RIGHT ARM!
BASTARD! SURROUND HIM IN A CIRCLE!
ザザッ
SHWSHHH


SURROUNDED BY EXPERT SWORDSMEN ...
NOT EVEN A SKILLFUL MASTER COULD GET OUT OF IT UNINJURED.
FIRST, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO BREAK THROUGH A PORTION OF THE ENCIRCLEMENT.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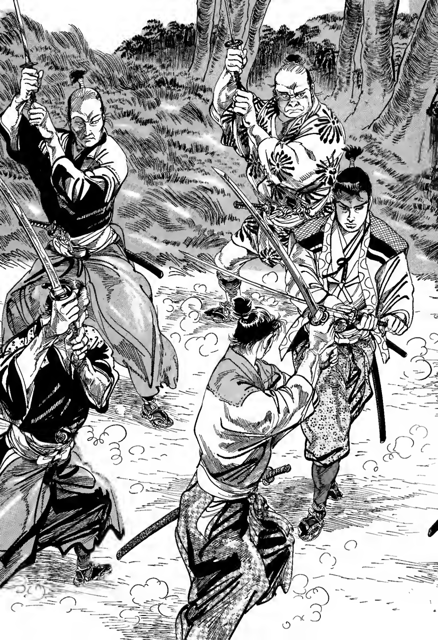
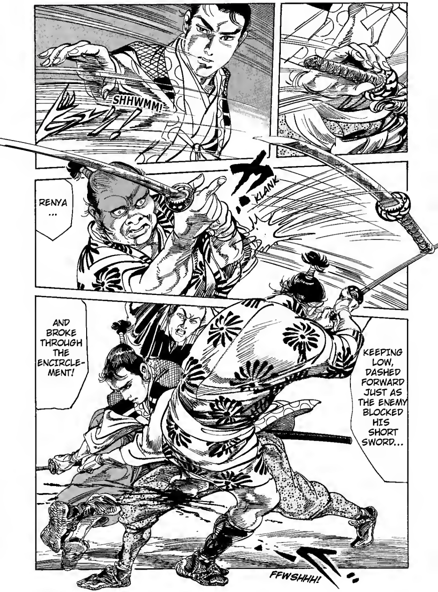
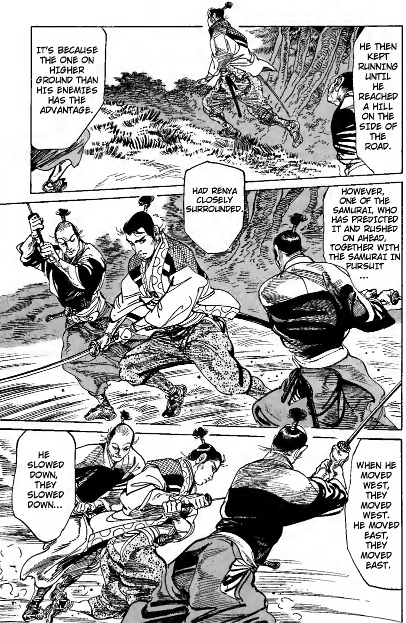
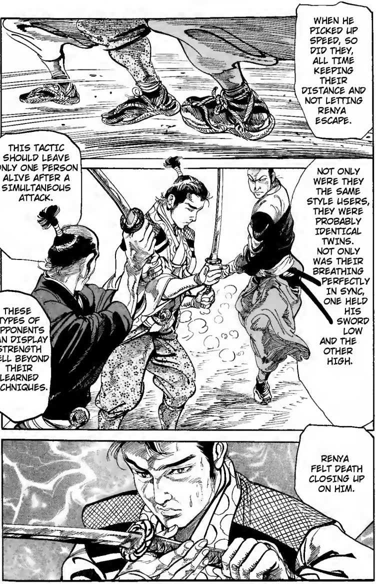
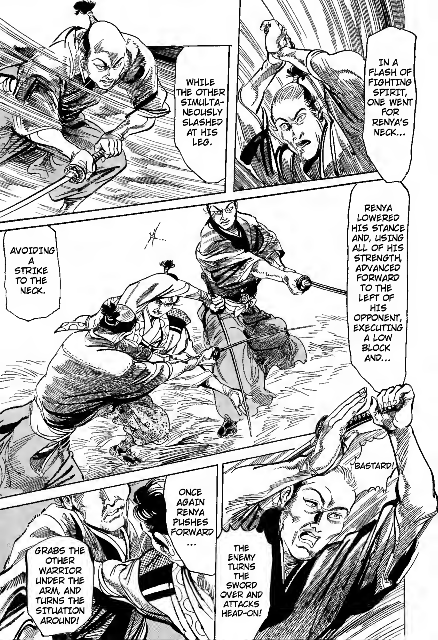
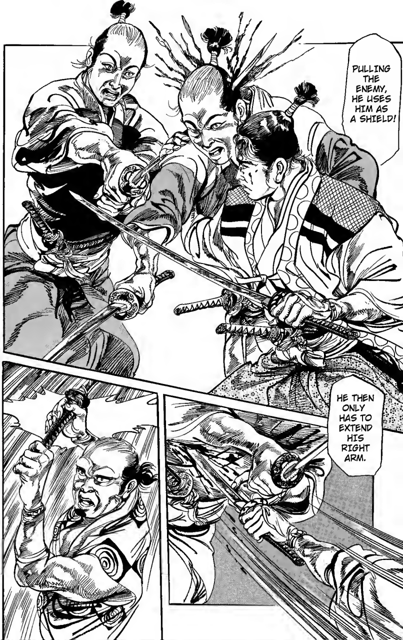


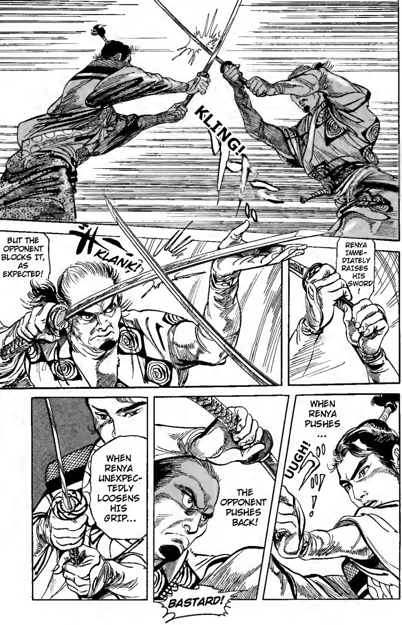

SHHWMM!
KLANK
RENYA ...
KEEPING LOW, DASHED FORWARD JUST AS THE ENEMY BLOCKED HIS SHORT SWORD...
AND BROKE THROUGH THE ENCIRCLEMENT!
FFWSHHH!

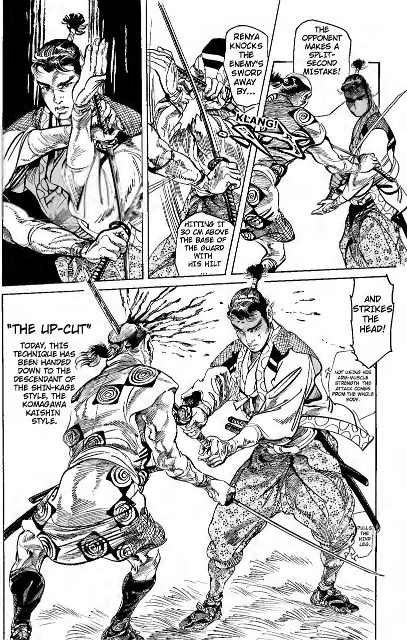

HE THEN KEPT RUNNING UNTIL HE REACHED A HILL ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.
IT'S BECAUSE THE ONE ON HIGHER GROUND THAN HIS ENEMIES HAS THE ADVANTAGE.
HOWEVER, ONE OF THE SAMURAI, WHO HAS PREDICTED IT AND RUSHED ON AHEAD, TOGETHER WITH THE SAMURAI IN PURSUIT ...
HAD RENYA CLOSELY SURROUNDED.
WHEN HE MOVED WEST, THEY MOVED WEST. HE MOVED EAST, THEY MOVED EAST.
HE SLOWED DOWN, THEY SLOWED DOWN...

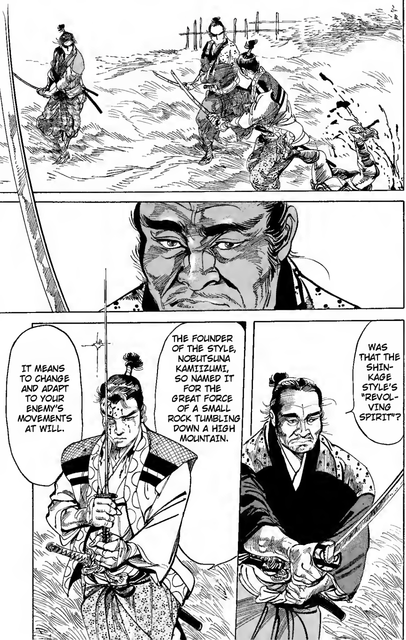

WHEN HE PICKED UP SPEED, SO DID THEY, ALL TIME KEEPING THEIR DISTANCE AND NOT LETTING RENYA ESCAPE.
NOT ONLY WERE THEY THE SAME STYLE USERS, THEY WERE PROBABLY IDENTICAL TWINS. NOT ONLY WAS THEIR BREATHING PERFECTLY IN SYNC, ONE HELD HIS SWORD LOW AND THE OTHER HIGH.
THIS TACTIC SHOULD LEAVE ONLY ONE PERSON ALIVE AFTER A SIMULTANEOUS ATTACK.
THESE TYPES OF OPPONENTS CAN DISPLAY STRENGTH WELL BEYOND THEIR LEARNED TECHNIQUES.
RENYA FELT DEATH CLOSING UP ON HIM.

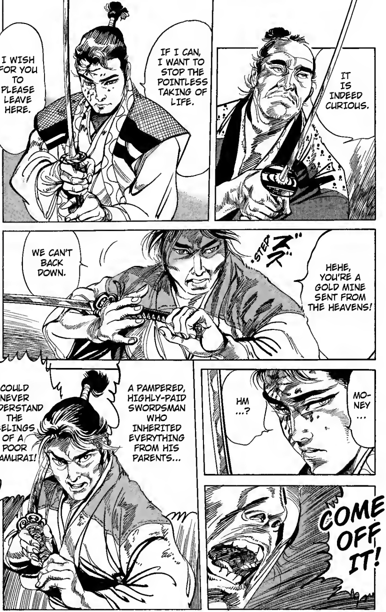

IN A FLASH OF FIGHTING SPIRIT, ONE WENT FOR RENYA'S NECK...
WHILE THE OTHER SIMULTANEOUSLY SLASHED AT HIS LEG.
RENYA LOWERED HIS STANCE AND, USING ALL OF HIS STRENGTH, ADVANCED FORWARD TO THE LEFT OF HIS OPPONENT, EXECUTING A LOW BLOCK AND...
AVOIDING A STRIKE TO THE NECK.
BASTARD!
THE ENEMY TURNS THE SWORD OVER AND ATTACKS HEAD-ON!
ONCE AGAIN RENYA PUSHES FORWARD ...
GRABS THE OTHER WARRIOR UNDER THE ARM, AND TURNS THE SITUATION AROUND!

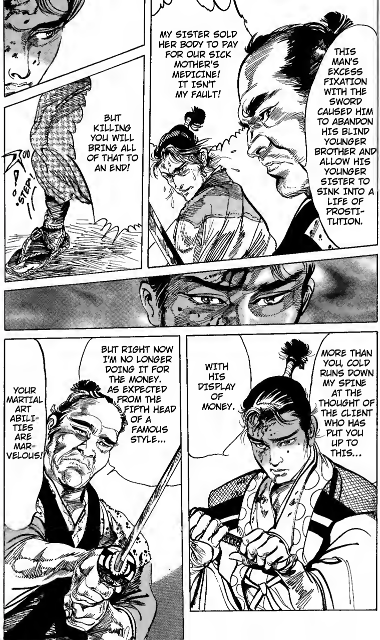

PULLING THE ENEMY, HE USES HIM AS A SHIELD!
HE THEN ONLY HAS TO EXTEND HIS RIGHT ARM.

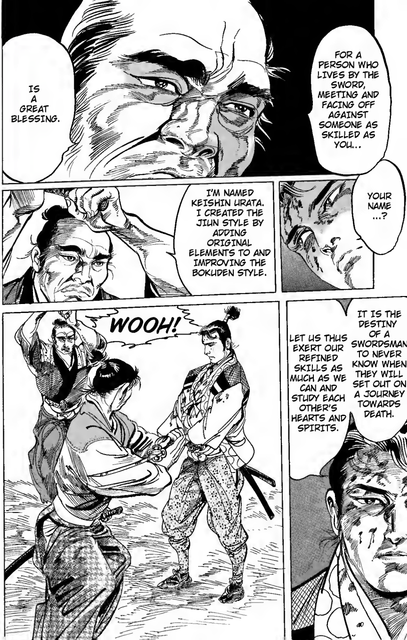

KLING!
RENYA IMMEDIATELY RAISES HIS SWORD!
BUT THE OPPONENT BLOCKS IT, AS EXPECTED!
KLANK!
WHEN RENYA PUSHES ...
UUGH!
THE OPPONENT PUSHES BACK!
BASTARD!
WHEN RENYA UNEXPECTEDLY LOOSENS HIS GRIP...

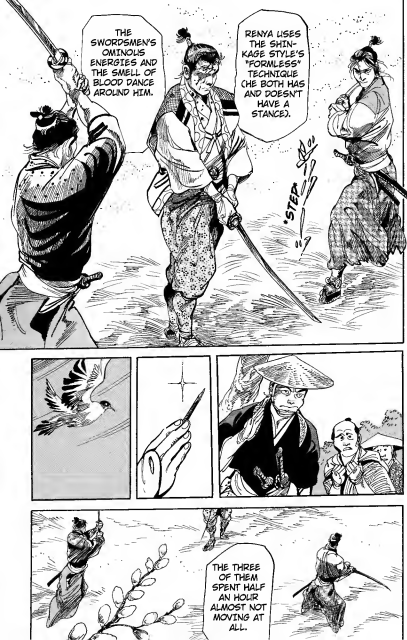

THE OPPONENT MAKES A SPLIT-SECOND MISTAKE!
RENYA KNOCKS THE ENEMY'S SWORD AWAY BY...
KLANG!
HITTING IT 30 CM ABOVE THE BASE OF THE GUARD WITH HIS HILT ...
AND STRIKES THE HEAD!
NOT USING HIS ARM-MUSCLE STRENGTH THE ATTACK COMES FROM THE WHOLE BODY.
"THE UP-CUT"
TODAY, THIS TECHNIQUE HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN TO THE DESCENDANT OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE, THE KOMAGAWA KAISHIN STYLE.
PULLS THE HIND LEG.

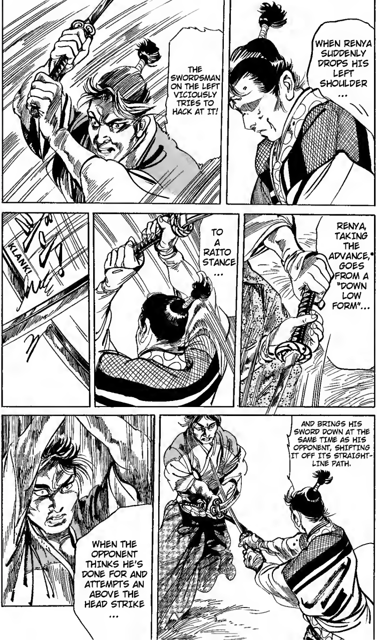

WAS THAT THE SHINKAGE STYLE'S "REVOLVING SPIRIT"?
THE FOUNDER OF THE STYLE, NOBUTSUNA KAMIIZUMI, SO NAMED IT FOR THE GREAT FORCE OF A SMALL ROCK TUMBLING DOWN A HIGH MOUNTAIN.
IT MEANS TO CHANGE AND ADAPT TO YOUR ENEMY'S MOVEMENTS AT WILL.


IT IS INDEED CURIOUS.
IF I CAN, I WANT TO STOP THE POINTLESS TAKING OF LIFE.
I WISH FOR YOU TO PLEASE LEAVE HERE.
HEHE, YOU'RE A GOLD MINE SENT FROM THE HEAVENS!
*STEP
WE CAN'T BACK DOWN.
MO-NEY ...
HM ...?
A PAMPERED, HIGHLY-PAID SWORDSMAN WHO INHERITED EVERYTHING FROM HIS PARENTS...
COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS OF A POOR SAMURAI!
COME OFF IT!


THIS MAN'S EXCESS FIXATION WITH THE SWORD CAUSED HIM TO ABANDON HIS BLIND YOUNGER BROTHER AND ALLOW HIS YOUNGER SISTER TO SINK INTO A LIFE OF PROSTITUTION.
MY SISTER SOLD HER BODY TO PAY FOR OUR SICK MOTHER'S MEDICINE! IT ISN'T MY FAULT!
BUT KILLING YOU WILL BRING ALL OF THAT TO AN END!
ZOO
STEP
MORE THAN YOU, COLD RUNS DOWN MY SPINE AT THE THOUGHT OF THE CLIENT WHO HAS PUT YOU UP TO THIS...
WITH HIS DISPLAY OF MONEY.
BUT RIGHT NOW I'M NO LONGER DOING IT FOR THE MONEY. AS EXPECTED FROM THE FIFTH HEAD OF A FAMOUS STYLE...
YOUR MARTIAL ART ABILITIES ARE MARVELOUS!

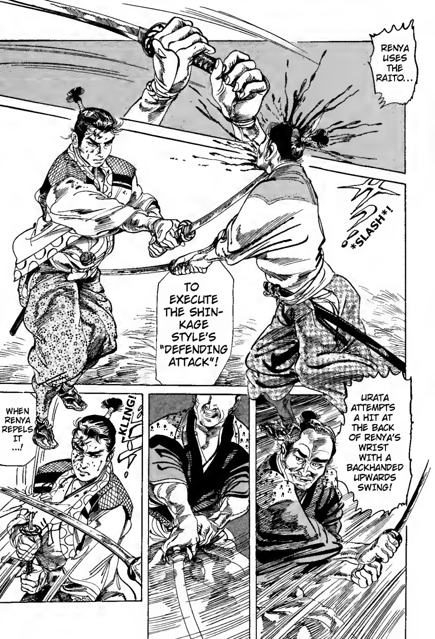

FOR A PERSON WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD, MEETING AND FACING OFF AGAINST SOMEONE AS SKILLED AS YOU...
IS A GREAT BLESSING.
YOUR NAME ...?
I'M NAMED KEISHIN URATA. I CREATED THE JIUN STYLE BY ADDING ORIGINAL ELEMENTS TO AND IMPROVING THE BOKUDEN STYLE.
IT IS THE DESTINY OF A SWORDSMAN TO NEVER KNOW WHEN THEY WILL SET OUT ON A JOURNEY TOWARDS DEATH.
LET US THUS EXERT OUR REFINED SKILLS AS MUCH AS WE CAN AND STUDY EACH OTHER'S HEARTS AND SPIRITS.
WOOH!

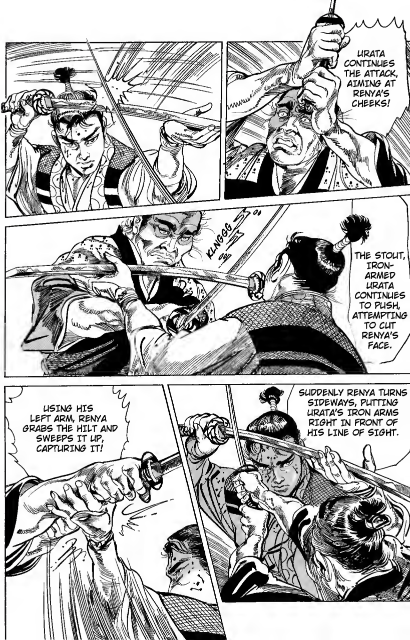

RENYA USES THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "FORMLESS" TECHNIQUE (HE BOTH HAS AND DOESN'T HAVE A STANCE).
THE SWORDSMEN'S OMINOUS ENERGIES AND THE SMELL OF BLOOD DANCE AROUND HIM.
*STEP
THE THREE OF THEM SPENT HALF AN HOUR ALMOST NOT MOVING AT ALL.

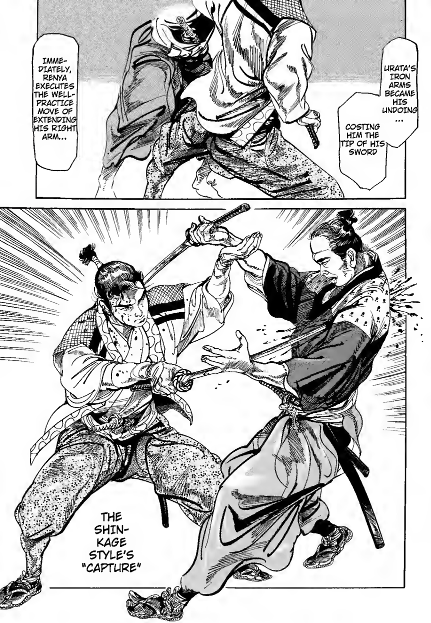

WHEN RENYA SUDDENLY DROPS HIS LEFT SHOULDER ...
THE SWORDSMAN ON THE LEFT VICIOUSLY TRIES TO HACK AT IT!
RENYA, TAKING THE ADVANCE,* GOES FROM A "DOWN LOW FORM"...
TO A RAITO STANCE ...
KLANK!
AND BRINGS HIS SWORD DOWN AT THE SAME TIME AS HIS OPPONENT, SHIFTING IT OFF ITS STRAIGHT-LINE PATH.
WHEN THE OPPONENT THINKS HE'S DONE FOR AND ATTEMPTS AN ABOVE THE HEAD STRIKE ...

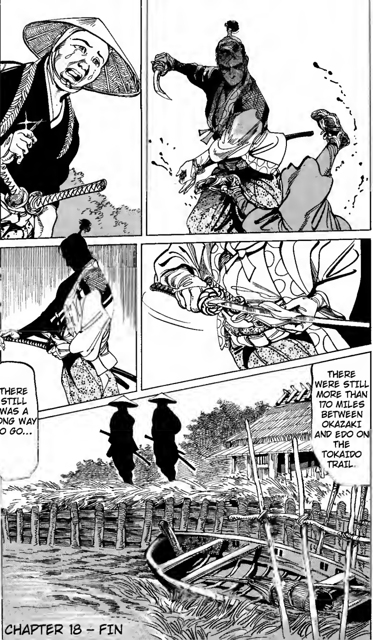
---

* TO TAKE THE ADVANCE MEANS TO SPOT THE UNCONSCIOUS SIGNS OF A COMING ENEMY ATTACK (WHICH SHOW FIRST IN HIS EYES, LEGS, SHOULDERS ETC.) IT ALSO MEANS TO REACT TO THOSE SIGNS.


RENYA USES THE RAITO...
SLASH!
TO EXECUTE THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "DEFENDING ATTACK"!
URATA ATTEMPTS A HIT AT THE BACK OF RENYA'S WRIST WITH A BACKHANDED UPWARDS SWING!
KLING!
WHEN RENYA REPELS IT ...!

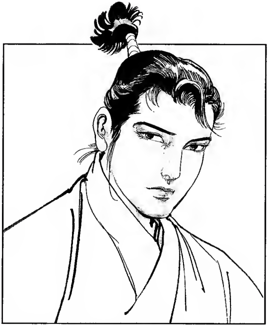

URATA CONTINUES THE ATTACK, AIMING AT RENYA'S CHEEKS!
KLNGGG
THE STOUT, IRON-ARMED URATA CONTINUES TO PUSH, ATTEMPTING TO CUT RENYA'S FACE.
SUDDENLY RENYA TURNS SIDEWAYS, PUTTING URATA'S IRON ARMS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIS LINE OF SIGHT.
USING HIS LEFT ARM, RENYA GRABS THE HILT AND SWEEPS IT UP, CAPTURING IT!


IMMEDIATELY, RENYA EXECUTES THE WELL-PRACTICE MOVE OF EXTENDING HIS RIGHT ARM...
URATA'S IRON ARMS BECAME HIS UNDOING ...
COSTING HIM THE TIP OF HIS SWORD
THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "CAPTURE"


THERE WERE STILL MORE THAN 170 MILES BETWEEN OKAZAKI AND EDO ON THE TOKAIDO TRAIL.
THERE STILL WAS A LONG WAY TO GO...

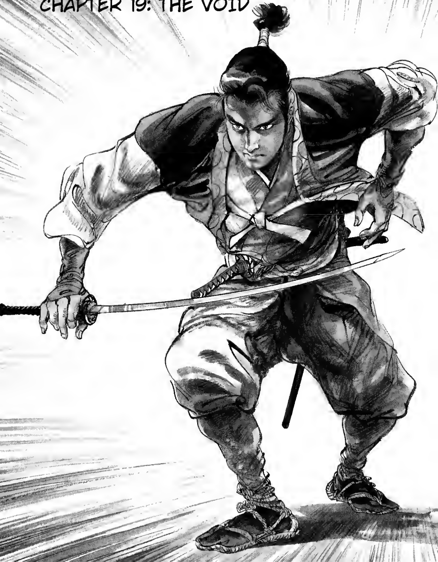
●［第十八話］完●

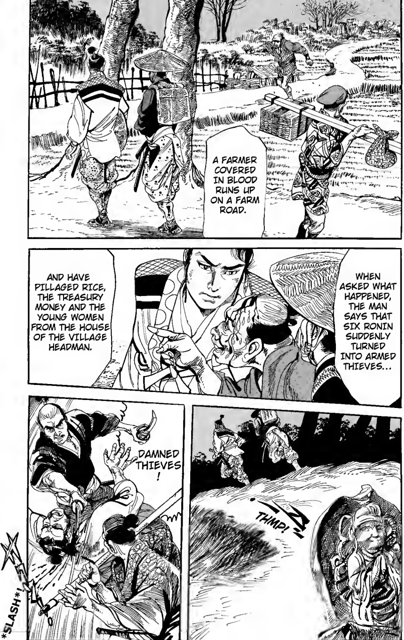
CHAPTER 18 – FIN

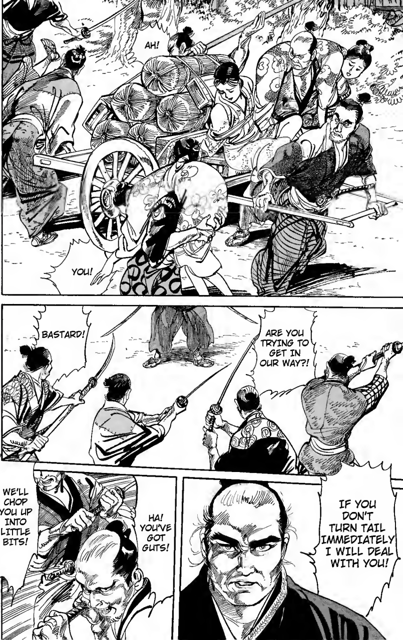


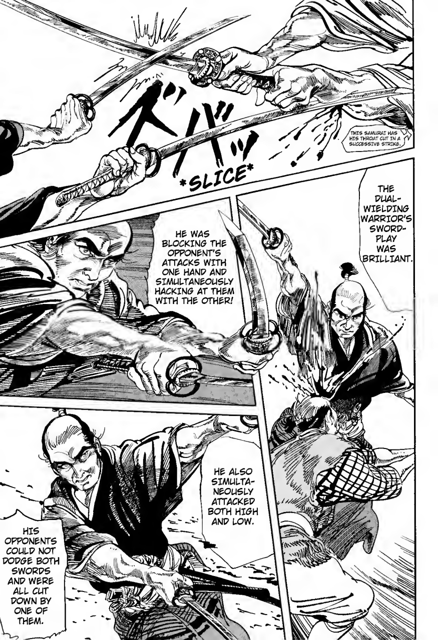
[第十九話]無空（むくう）

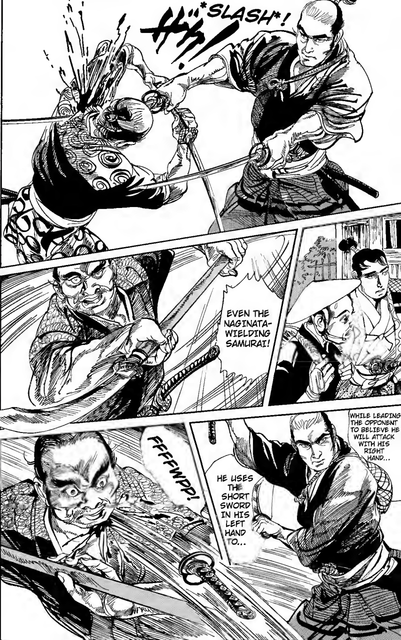
CHAPTER 19: THE VOID

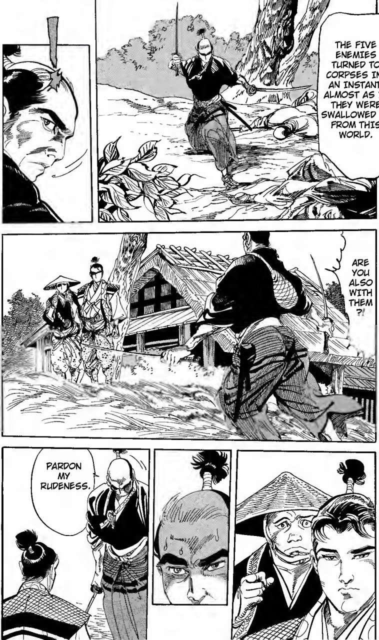


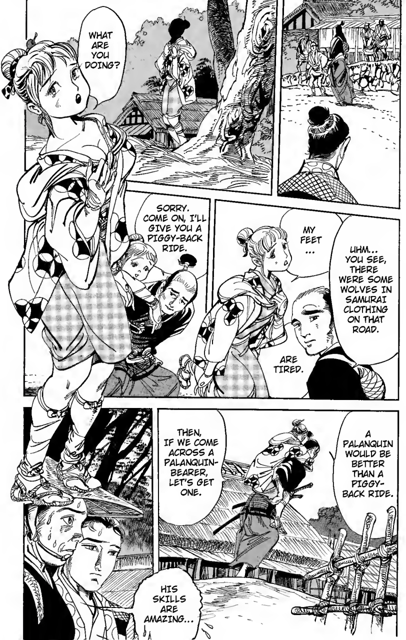

A FARMER COVERED IN BLOOD RUNS UP ON A FARM ROAD.
WHEN ASKED WHAT HAPPENED, THE MAN SAYS THAT SIX RONIN SUDDENLY TURNED INTO ARMED THIEVES...
AND HAVE PILLAGED RICE, THE TREASURY MONEY AND THE YOUNG WOMEN FROM THE HOUSE OF THE VILLAGE HEADMAN.
THMP!
DAMNED THIEVES!
SLASH!

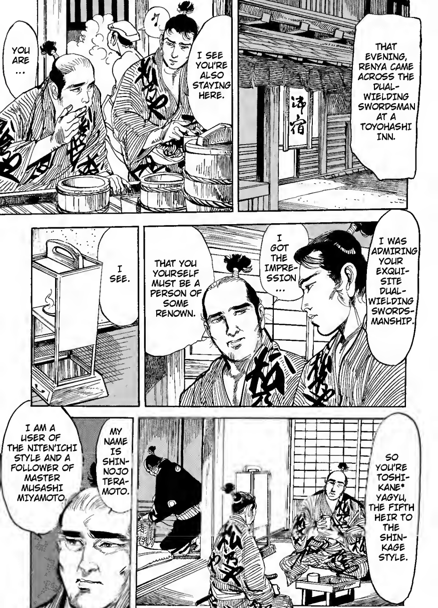

AH!
YOU!
ARE YOU TRYING TO GET IN OUR WAY?!
BASTARD!
IF YOU DON'T TURN TAIL IMMEDIATELY I WILL DEAL WITH YOU!
HA! YOU'VE GOT GUTS!
WE'LL CHOP YOU UP INTO LITTLE BITS!


THIS SAMURAI HAS HIS THROAT CUT IN A SUCCESSIVE STRIKE.
ズバッ
SLICE
THE DUAL-WIELDING WARRIOR'S SWORDPLAY WAS BRILLIANT.
HE WAS BLOCKING THE OPPONENT'S ATTACKS WITH ONE HAND AND SIMULTANEOUSLY HACKING AT THEM WITH THE OTHER!
HE ALSO SIMULTANEOUSLY ATTACKED BOTH HIGH AND LOW.
HIS OPPONENTS COULD NOT DODGE BOTH SWORDS AND WERE ALL CUT DOWN BY ONE OF THEM.

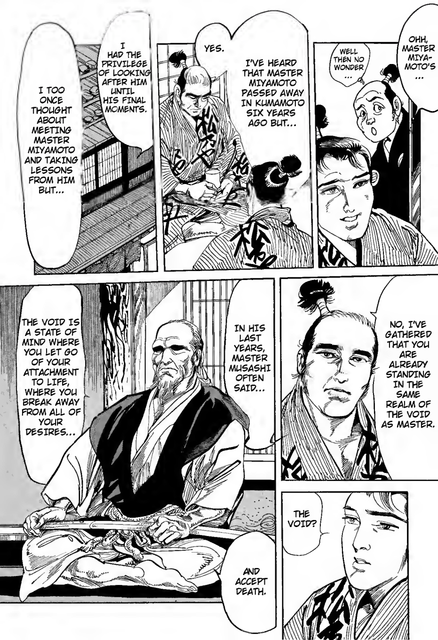

SLASH!
EVEN THE NAGINATA-WIELDING SAMURAI!
WHILE LEADING THE OPPONENT TO BELIEVE HE WILL ATTACK WITH HIS RIGHT HAND...
HE USES TH SHORT SWORD IN HIS LEFT HAND TO...
FFFFWPP!

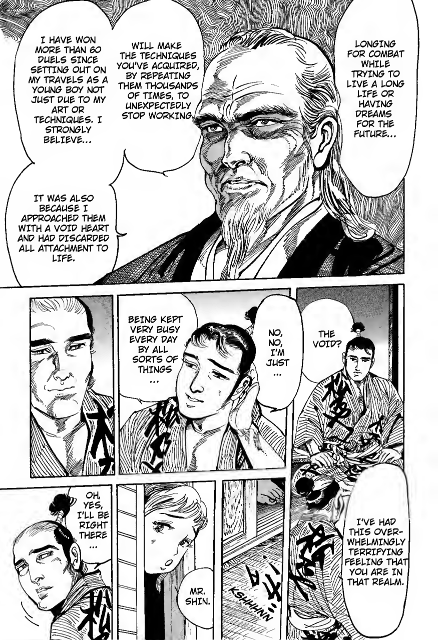

THE FIVE ENEMIES TURNED TO CORPSES IN AN INSTANT, ALMOST AS IF THEY WERE SWALLOWED UP FROM THIS WORLD.
!
ARE YOU ALSO WITH THEM ?!
PARDON MY RUDENESS.

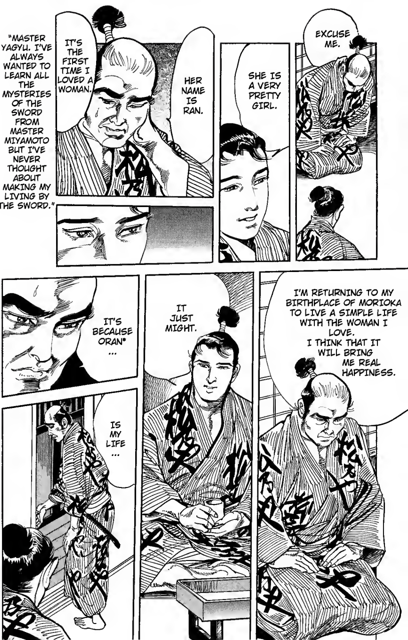

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
UHM... YOU SEE, THERE WERE SOME WOLVES IN SAMURAI CLOTHING ON THAT ROAD.
MY FEET ...
ARE TIRED.
SORRY. COME ON, I'LL GIVE YOU A PIGGY-BACK RIDE.
A PALANQUIN WOULD BE BETTER THAN A PIGGY-BACK RIDE.
THEN, IF WE COME ACROSS A PALANQUIN-BEARER, LET'S GET ONE.
HIS SKILLS ARE AMAZING...


THAT EVENING, RENYA CAME ACROSS THE DUAL-WIELDING SWORDSMAN AT A TOYOHASHI INN.
旅宿
I SEE YOU'RE ALSO STAYING HERE.
YOU ARE ...
I WAS ADMIRING YOUR EXQUISITE DUAL-WIELDING SWORDSMANSHIP.
I GOT THE IMPRESSION ...
THAT YOU YOURSELF MUST BE A PERSON OF SOME RENOWN.
I SEE.
SO YOU'RE TOSHIKANE* YAGYU, THE FIFTH HEIR TO THE SHINKAGE STYLE.
MY NAME IS SHINNOJO TERAMOTO.
I AM A USER OF THE NITEN'ICHI STYLE AND A FOLLOWER OF MASTER MUSASHI MIYAMOTO.

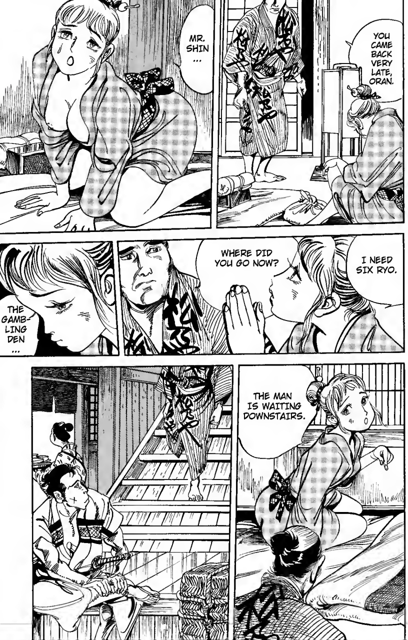
* LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI.

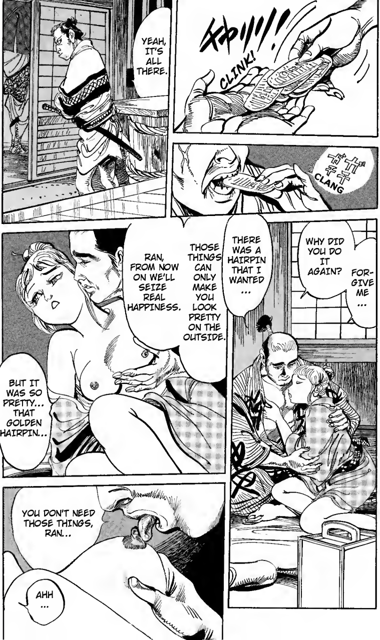

I TOO ONCE THOUGHT ABOUT MEETING MASTER MIYAMOTO AND TAKING LESSONS FROM HIM BUT...
I'VE HEARD THAT MASTER MIYAMOTO PASSED AWAY IN KUMAMOTO SIX YEARS AGO BUT...
YES.
I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF LOOKING AFTER HIM UNTIL HIS FINAL MOMENTS.
WELL THEN NO WONDER ...
OHH, MASTER MIYA-MOTO'S ...
NO, I'VE GATHERED THAT YOU ARE ALREADY STANDING IN THE SAME REALM OF THE VOID AS MASTER.
THE VOID?
IN HIS LAST YEARS, MASTER MUSASHI OFTEN SAID...
THE VOID IS A STATE OF MIND WHERE YOU LET GO OF YOUR ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, WHERE YOU BREAK AWAY FROM ALL OF YOUR DESIRES...
AND ACCEPT DEATH.

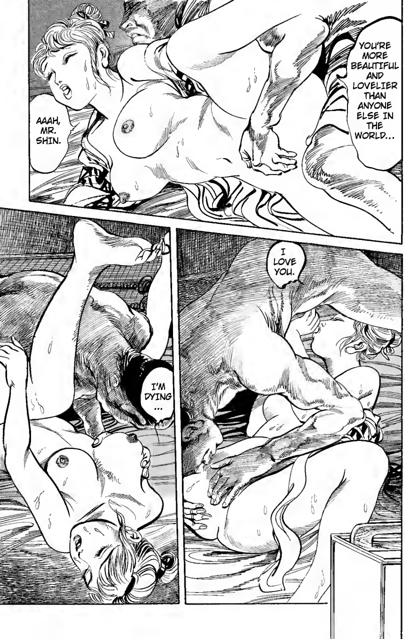

LONGING FOR COMBAT WHILE TRYING TO LIVE A LONG LIFE OR HAVING DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE...
WILL MAKE THE TECHNIQUES YOU'VE ACQUIRED, BY REPEATING THEM THOUSANDS OF TIMES, TO UNEXPECTEDLY STOP WORKING.
I HAVE WON MORE THAN 60 DUELS SINCE SETTING OUT ON MY TRAVELS AS A YOUNG BOY NOT JUST DUE TO MY ART OR TECHNIQUES. I STRONGLY BELIEVE...
IT WAS ALSO BECAUSE I APPROACHED THEM WITH A VOID HEART AND HAD DISCARDED ALL ATTACHMENT TO LIFE.
THE VOID?
NO, NO, I'M JUST ...
BEING KEPT VERY BUSY EVERY DAY BY ALL SORTS OF THINGS ...
I'VE HAD THIS OVERWHELMINGLY TERRIFYING FEELING THAT YOU ARE IN THAT REALM.
KSHHHNN
MR. SHIN.
OH, YES, I'LL BE RIGHT THERE ...

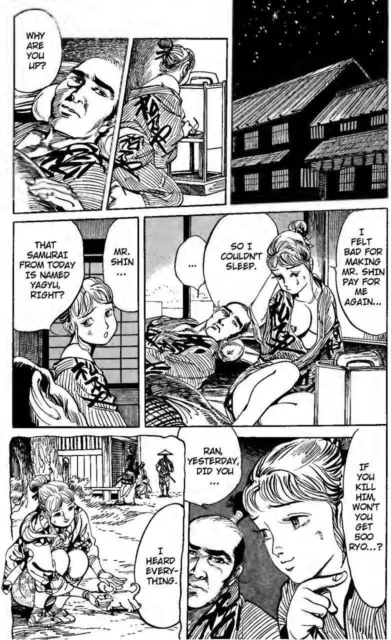

EXCUSE ME.
SHE IS A VERY PRETTY GIRL.
HER NAME IS RAN.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I LOVED A WOMAN.
"MASTER YAGYU. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO LEARN ALL THE MYSTERIES OF THE SWORD FROM MASTER MIYAMOTO BUT I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT MAKING MY LIVING BY THE SWORD."
I'M RETURNING TO MY BIRTHPLACE OF MORIOKA TO LIVE A SIMPLE LIFE WITH THE WOMAN I LOVE. I THINK THAT IT WILL BRING ME REAL HAPPINESS.
IT JUST MIGHT.
IT'S BECAUSE ORAN* ...
IS MY LIFE ...

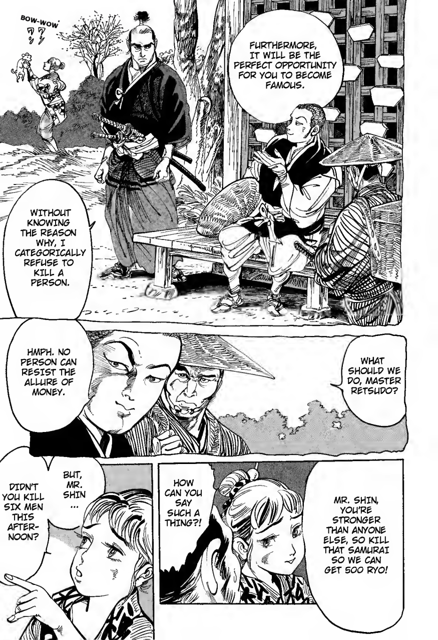
* ADDING AN O- PREFIX TO JAPANESE NOUNS OR (MOST OFTEN) FEMALE NAMES MAKES THE EXPRESSION MORE POLITE.

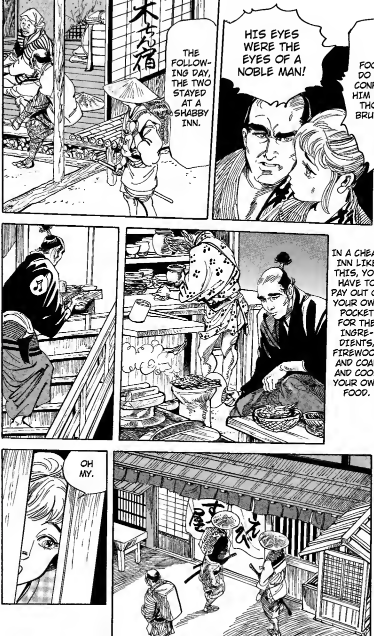

YOU CAME BACK VERY LATE, ORAN.
MR. SHIN ...
WHERE DID YOU GO NOW?
THE GAMBLING DEN ...
I NEED SIX RYO.
THE MAN IS WAITING DOWNSTAIRS.

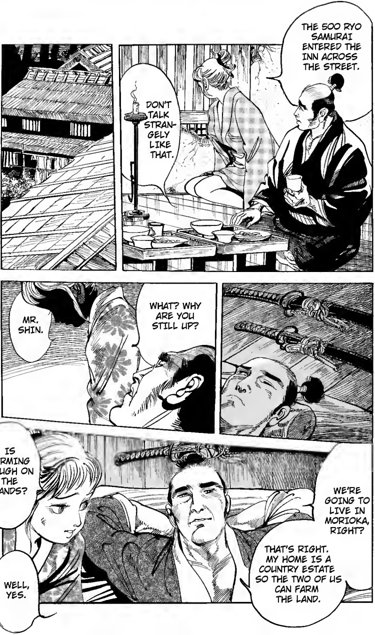

チャリ!!!
CLINK!
ガギギ
CLANG
YEAH, IT'S ALL THERE.
WHY DID YOU DO IT AGAIN?
FORGIVE ME ...
THERE WAS A HAIRPIN THAT I WANTED ...
THOSE THINGS CAN ONLY MAKE YOU LOOK PRETTY ON THE OUTSIDE.
RAN, FROM NOW ON WE'LL SEIZE REAL HAPPINESS.
BUT IT WAS SO PRETTY... THAT GOLDEN HAIRPIN...
YOU DON'T NEED THOSE THINGS, RAN...
AHH ...

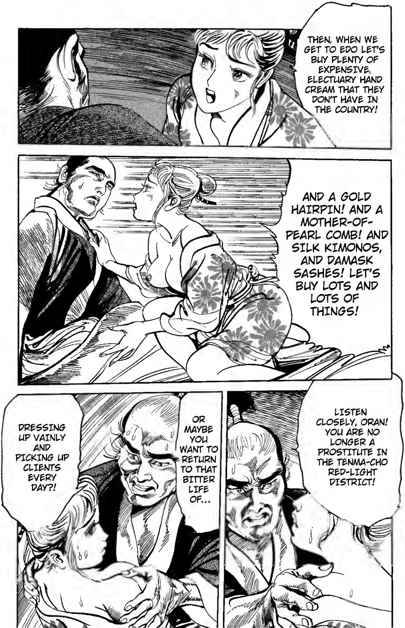

YOU'RE MORE BEAUTIFUL AND LOVELIER THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD...
AAAH, MR. SHIN.
I LOVE YOU.
I'M DYING...

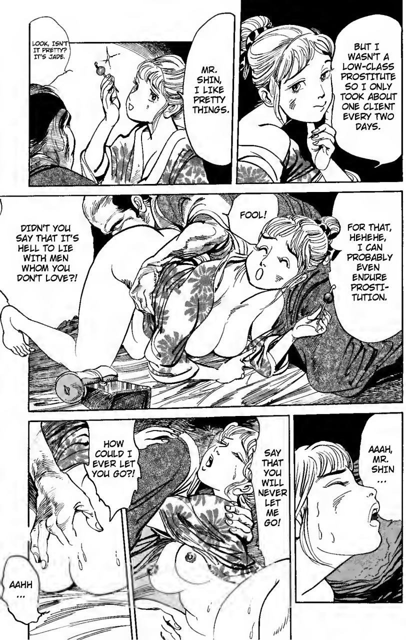

WHY ARE YOU UP?
I FELT BAD FOR MAKING MR. SHIN PAY FOR ME AGAIN...
SO I COULDN'T SLEEP.
...
MR. SHIN ...
THAT SAMURAI FROM TODAY IS NAMED YAGYU, RIGHT?
IF YOU KILL HIM, WON'T YOU GET 500 RYO...?
RAN, YESTERDAY, DID YOU ...
I HEARD EVERYTHING.

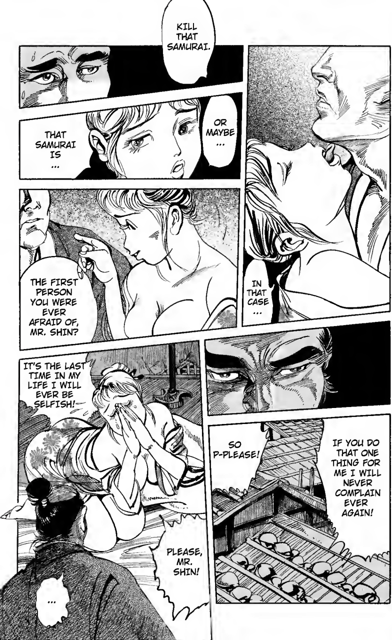

BOW-WOW
FURTHERMORE, IT WILL BE THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO BECOME FAMOUS.
WITHOUT KNOWING THE REASON WHY, I CATEGORICALLY REFUSE TO KILL A PERSON.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO, MASTER RETSUDO?
HMPH. NO PERSON CAN RESIST THE ALLURE OF MONEY.
MR. SHIN, YOU'RE STRONGER THAN ANYONE ELSE, SO KILL THAT SAMURAI SO WE CAN GET 500 RYO!
HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH A THING?!
BUT, MR. SHIN ...
DIDN'T YOU KILL SIX MEN THIS AFTERNOON?

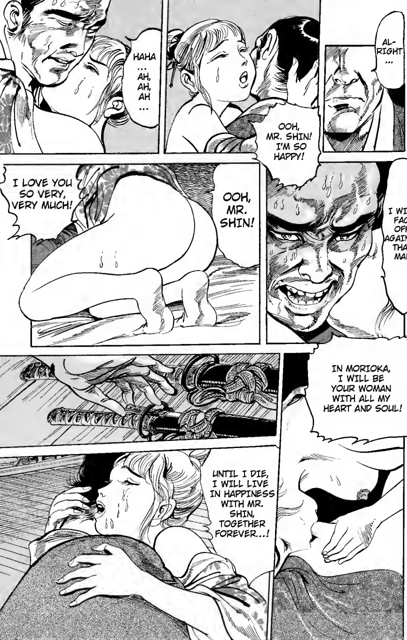
HIS EYES WERE THE EYES OF A NOBLE MAN!
FOOL! DO NOT CONFUSE HIM WITH THOSE BRUTES!
THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE TWO STAYED AT A SHABBY INN.
木ちん宿
IN A CHEAP INN LIKE THIS, YOU HAVE TO PAY OUT OF YOUR OWN POCKET FOR THE INGREDIENTS, FIREWOOD AND COAL AND COOK YOUR OWN FOOD.
ゑびす屋
OH MY.

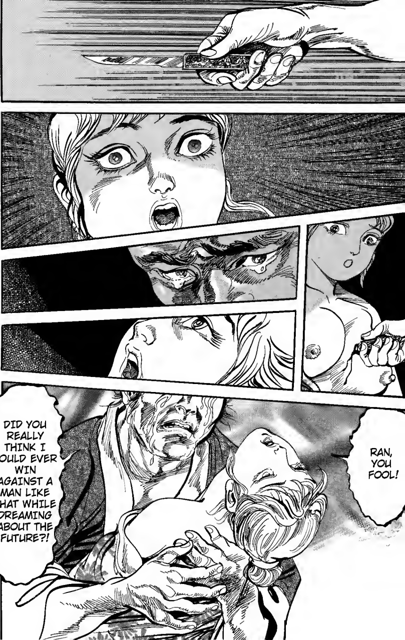

THE 500 RYO SAMURAI ENTERED THE INN ACROSS THE STREET.
DON'T TALK STRANGELY LIKE THAT.
MR. SHIN.
WHAT? WHY ARE YOU STILL UP?
WE'RE GOING TO LIVE IN MORIOKA, RIGHT?
THAT'S RIGHT. MY HOME IS A COUNTRY ESTATE SO THE TWO OF US CAN FARM THE LAND.
IS FARMING ROUGH ON THE HANDS?
WELL, YES.

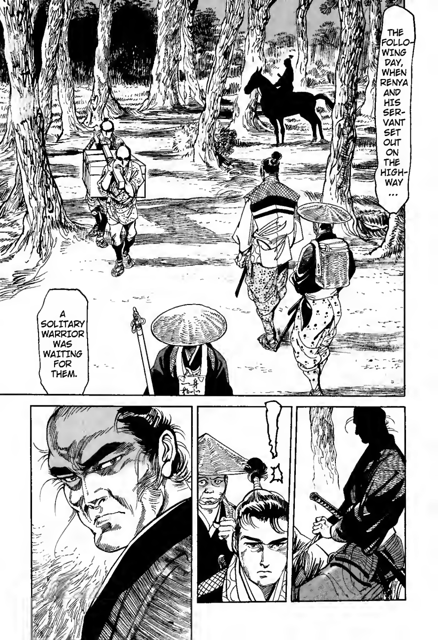

THEN, WHEN WE GET TO EDO LET'S BUY PLENTY OF EXPENSIVE ELECTUARY HAND CREAM THAT THEY DON'T HAVE IN THE COUNTRY!
AND A GOLD HAIRPIN! AND A MOTHER-OF-PEARL COMB! AND SILK KIMONOS, AND DAMASK SASHES! LET'S BUY LOTS AND LOTS OF THINGS!
LISTEN CLOSELY, ORAN! YOU ARE NO LONGER A PROSTITUTE IN THE TENMA-CHO RED-LIGHT DISTRICT!
OR MAYBE YOU WANT TO RETURN TO THAT BITTER LIFE OF...
DRESSING UP VAINLY AND PICKING UP CLIENTS EVERY DAY?!

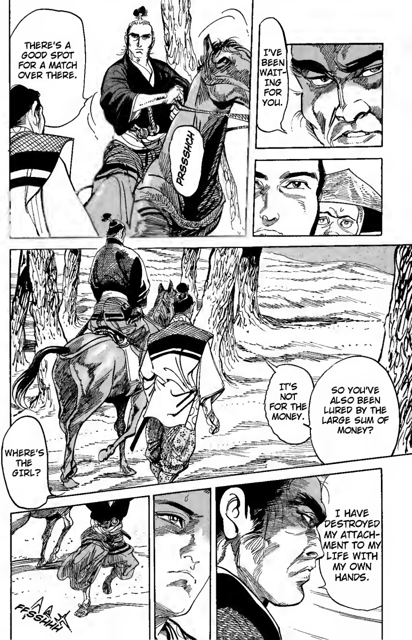

BUT I WASN'T A LOW-CLASS PROSTITUTE SO I ONLY TOOK ABOUT ONE CLIENT EVERY TWO DAYS.
MR. SHIN, I LIKE PRETTY THINGS.
LOOK, ISN'T IT PRETTY? IT'S JADE.
FOR THAT, HEHEHE, I CAN PROBABLY EVEN ENDURE PROSTITUTION.
FOOL!
DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT IT'S HELL TO LIE WITH MEN WHOM YOU DON'T LOVE?!
AAAH, MR. SHIN ...
SAY THAT YOU WILL NEVER LET ME GO!
HOW COULD I EVER LET YOU GO?!
AAHH ...

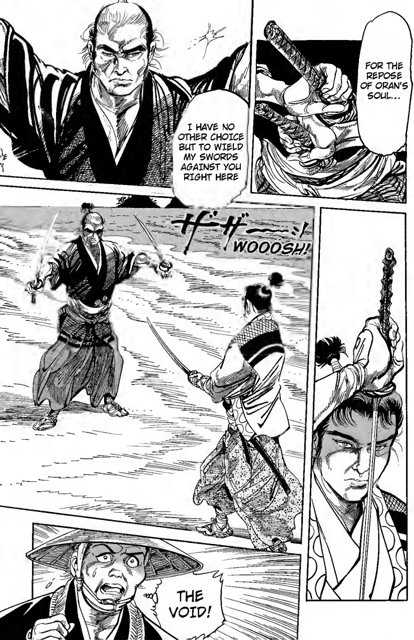

IN THAT CASE ...
KILL THAT SAMURAI.
OR MAYBE ...
THAT SAMURAI IS ...
THE FIRST PERSON YOU WERE EVER AFRAID OF, MR. SHIN?
IF YOU DO THAT ONE THING FOR ME I WILL NEVER COMPLAIN EVER AGAIN!
SO P-PLEASE!
IT'S THE LAST TIME IN MY LIFE I WILL EVER BE SELFISH!
PLEASE, MR. SHIN!
...

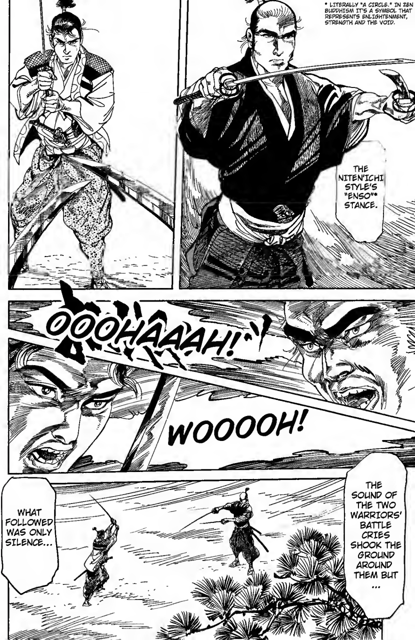

AL-RIGHT...
OOH, MR. SHIN! I'M SO HAPPY!
HAHA... AH, AH, AH...
I WILL FACE OFF AGAINST THAT MAN.
OOH, MR. SHIN!
I LOVE YOU SO VERY, VERY MUCH!
IN MORIOKA, I WILL BE YOUR WOMAN WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL!
UNTIL I DIE, I WILL LIVE IN HAPPINESS WITH MR. SHIN, TOGETHER FOREVER...!


RAN, YOU FOOL!
DID YOU REALLY THINK I COULD EVER WIN AGAINST A MAN LIKE THAT WHILE DREAMING ABOUT THE FUTURE?!


THE FOLLOWING DAY, WHEN RENYA AND HIS SERVANT SET OUT ON THE HIGHWAY ...
A SOLITARY WARRIOR WAS WAITING FOR THEM.
一身
!

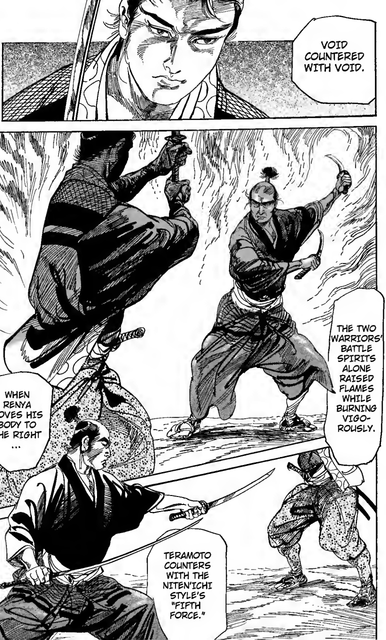

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
THERE'S A GOOD SPOT FOR A MATCH OVER THERE.
PRSSSHCH
SO YOU'VE ALSO BEEN LURED BY THE LARGE SUM OF MONEY?
IT'S NOT FOR THE MONEY.
WHERE'S THE GIRL?
I HAVE DESTROYED MY ATTACHMENT TO MY LIFE WITH MY OWN HANDS.
FFSSHHH

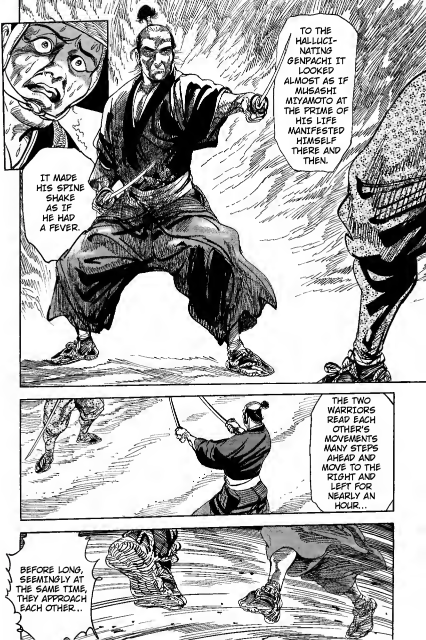

FOR THE REPOSE OF ORAN'S SOUL...
I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO WIELD MY SWORDS AGAINST YOU RIGHT HERE
ザザーッ!
WOOOSH!
THE VOID!

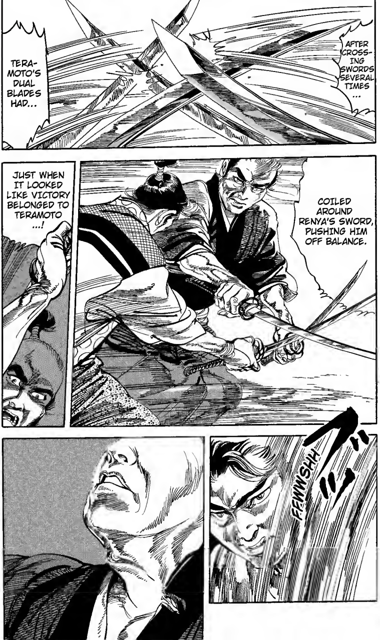

THE NITEN'ICHI STYLE'S "ENSO"* STANCE.
OOOHAAAH!
WOOOOH!
THE SOUND OF THE TWO WARRIORS' BATTLE CRIES SHOOK THE GROUND AROUND THEM BUT ...
WHAT FOLLOWED WAS ONLY SILENCE...

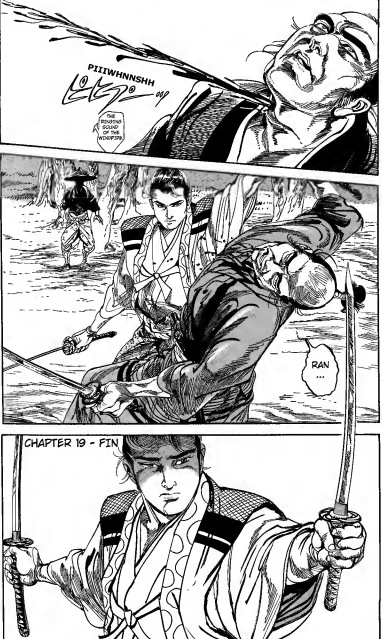
---

* LITERALLY "A CIRCLE." IN ZEN BUDDHISM IT'S A SYMBOL THAT REPRESENTS ENLIGHTENMENT, STRENGTH AND THE VOID.

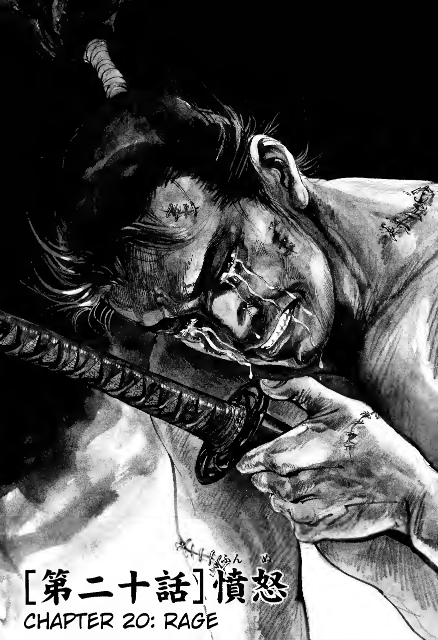

VOID COUNTERED WITH VOID.
THE TWO WARRIORS' BATTLE SPIRITS ALONE RAISED FLAMES WHILE BURNING VIGOROUSLY.
WHEN RENYA MOVES HIS BODY TO THE RIGHT ...
TERAMOTO COUNTERS WITH THE NITEN'ICHI STYLE'S "FIFTH FORCE."


TO THE HALLUCINATING GENPACHI IT LOOKED ALMOST AS IF MUSASHI MIYAMOTO AT THE PRIME OF HIS LIFE MANIFESTED HIMSELF THERE AND THEN.
IT MADE HIS SPINE SHAKE AS IF HE HAD A FEVER.
THE TWO WARRIORS READ EACH OTHER'S MOVEMENTS MANY STEPS AHEAD AND MOVE TO THE RIGHT AND LEFT FOR NEARLY AN HOUR...
BEFORE LONG, SEEMINGLY AT THE SAME TIME, THEY APPROACH EACH OTHER...


AFTER CROSSING SWORDS SEVERAL TIMES…
TERAMOTO'S DUAL BLADES HAD…
COILED AROUND RENYA'S SWORD, PUSHING HIM OFF BALANCE.
JUST WHEN IT LOOKED LIKE VICTORY BELONGED TO TERAMOTO…!
FFWWSHH

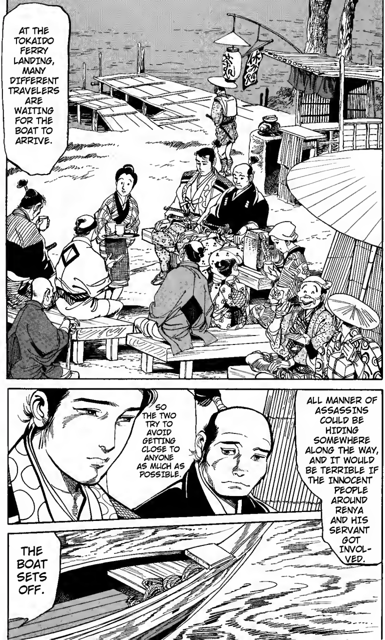

PIIIWHNNSHH
ピヒゥー‼
THE RINGING SOUND OF THE WINDPIPE.
RAN ...
CHAPTER 19 - FIN

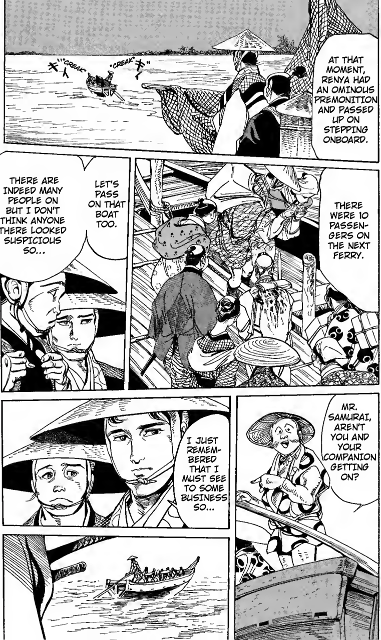
●[第十九話] 完●

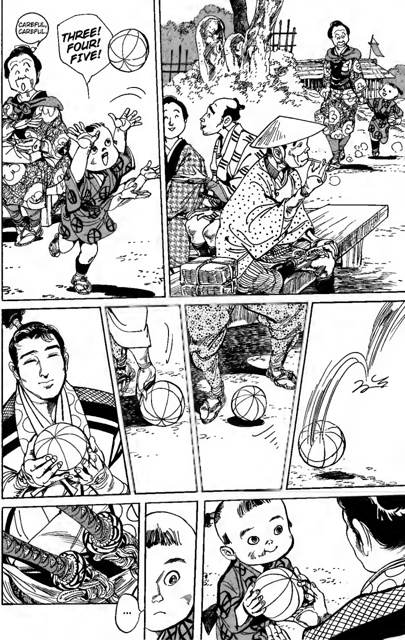


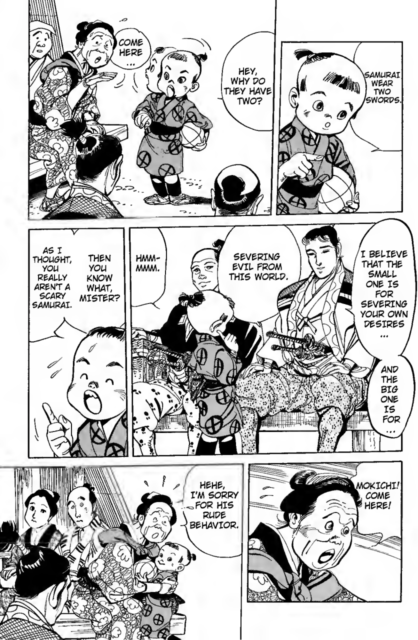
[第二十話]憤怒（ふんぬ）

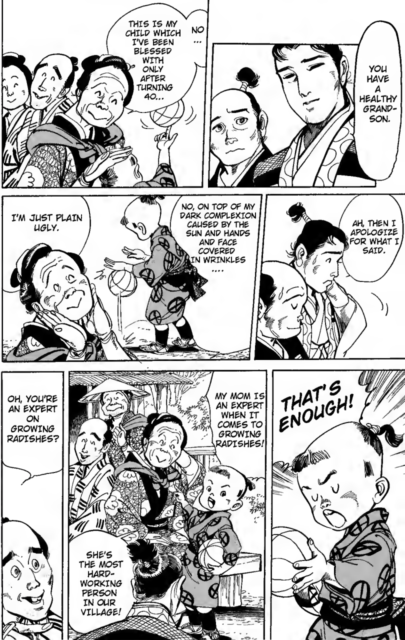
CHAPTER 20: RAGE

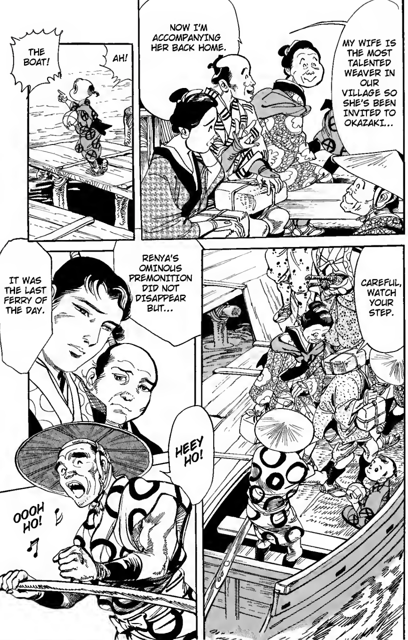

AT THE TOKAIDO FERRY LANDING, MANY DIFFERENT TRAVELERS ARE WAITING FOR THE BOAT TO ARRIVE.
ALL MANNER OF ASSASSINS COULD BE HIDING SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, AND IT WOULD BE TERRIBLE IF THE INNOCENT PEOPLE AROUND RENYA AND HIS SERVANT GOT INVOLVED.
SO THE TWO TRY TO AVOID GETTING CLOSE TO ANYONE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
THE BOAT SETS OFF.

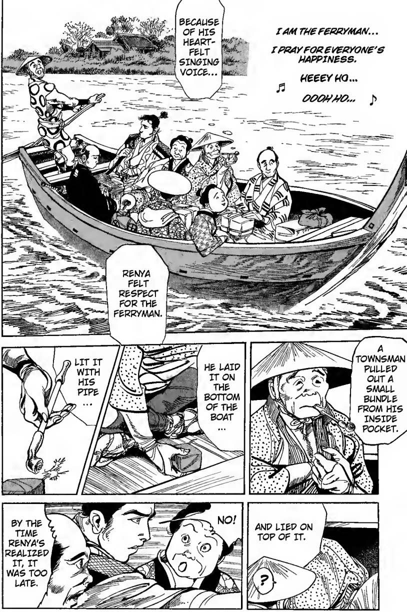

キィ "CREAK"
キィ "CREAK"
AT THAT MOMENT, RENYA HAD AN OMINOUS PREMONITION AND PASSED UP ON STEPPING ONBOARD.
THERE WERE 10 PASSENGERS ON THE NEXT FERRY.
LET'S PASS ON THAT BOAT TOO.
THERE ARE INDEED MANY PEOPLE ON BUT I DON'T THINK ANYONE THERE LOOKED SUSPICIOUS SO...
MR. SAMURAI, AREN'T YOU AND YOUR COMPANION GETTING ON?
I JUST REMEMBERED THAT I MUST SEE TO SOME BUSINESS SO...

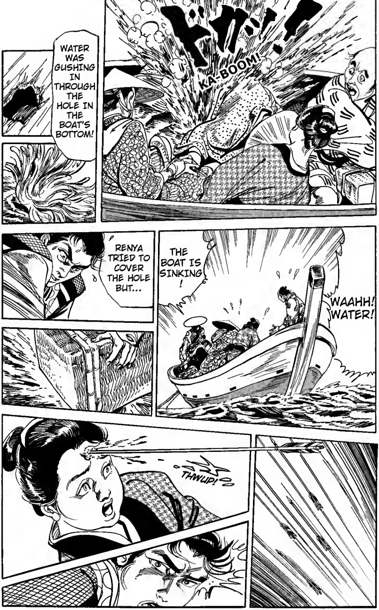

THREE! FOUR! FIVE!
CAREFUL, CAREFUL.
...

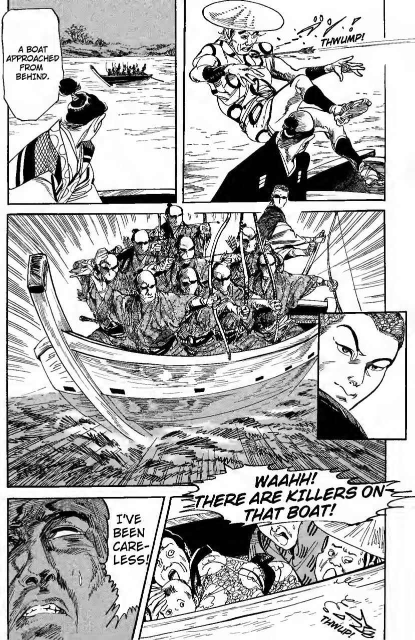

SAMURAI WEAR TWO SWORDS.
COME HERE ...
HEY, WHY DO THEY HAVE TWO?
I BELIEVE THAT THE SMALL ONE IS FOR SEVERING YOUR OWN DESIRES ...
AND THE BIG ONE IS FOR ...
SEVERING EVIL FROM THIS WORLD.
HMM-MMM.
THEN YOU KNOW WHAT, MISTER?
AS I THOUGHT, YOU REALLY AREN'T A SCARY SAMURAI.
MOKICHI! COME HERE!
HEHE, I'M SORRY FOR HIS RUDE BEHAVIOR.

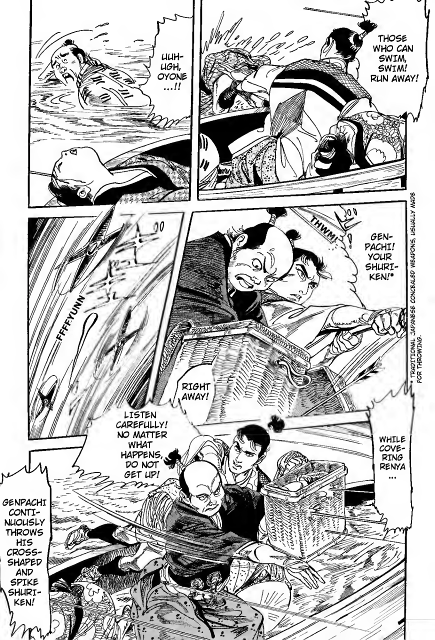

YOU HAVE A HEALTHY GRANDSON.
NO ...
THIS IS MY CHILD WHICH I'VE BEEN BLESSED WITH ONLY AFTER TURNING 40...
AH, THEN I APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT I SAID.
NO, ON TOP OF MY DARK COMPLEXION CAUSED BY THE SUN AND HANDS AND FACE COVERED IN WRINKLES ....
I'M JUST PLAIN UGLY.
THAT'S ENOUGH!
MY MOM IS AN EXPERT WHEN IT COMES TO GROWING RADISHES!
SHE'S THE MOST HARD-WORKING PERSON IN OUR VILLAGE!
OH, YOU'RE AN EXPERT ON GROWING RADISHES?


MY WIFE IS THE MOST TALENTED WEAVER IN OUR VILLAGE SO SHE'S BEEN INVITED TO OKAZAKI...
NOW I'M ACCOMPANYING HER BACK HOME.
AH!
THE BOAT!
CAREFUL, WATCH YOUR STEP.
RENYA'S OMINOUS PREMONITION DID NOT DISAPPEAR BUT...
IT WAS THE LAST FERRY OF THE DAY.
HEEY HO!
OOOH HO!

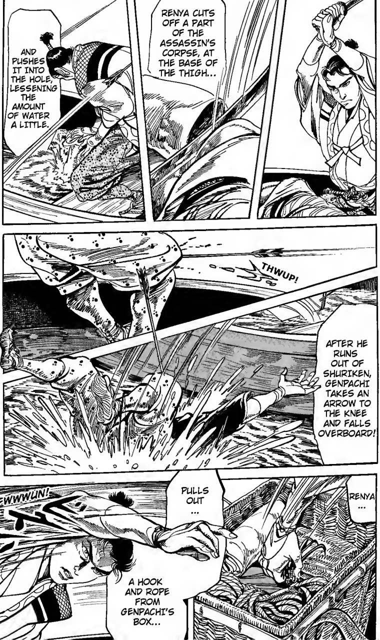

I AM THE FERRYMAN...
I PRAY FOR EVERYONE'S HAPPINESS.
♬ HEEEY HO...
OOOH HO... ♪
BECAUSE OF HIS HEART-FELT SINGING VOICE...
RENYA FELT RESPECT FOR THE FERRYMAN.
A TOWNSMAN PULLED OUT A SMALL BUNDLE FROM HIS INSIDE POCKET.
HE LAID IT ON THE BOTTOM OF THE BOAT ...
LIT IT WITH HIS PIPE ...
AND LIED ON TOP OF IT.
?
NO!
BY THE TIME RENYA'S REALIZED IT, IT WAS TOO LATE.

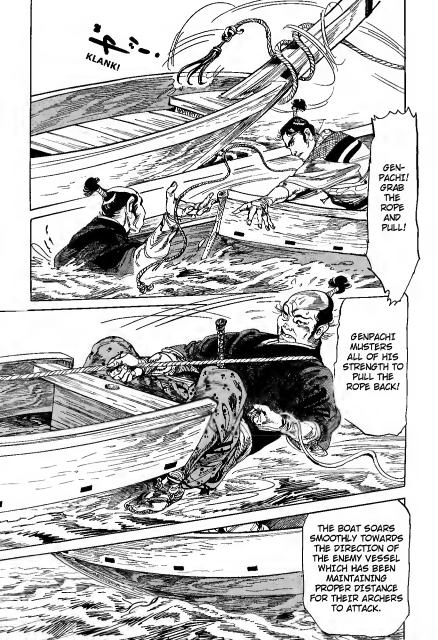

ドガッ!
KA-BOOM!
WATER WAS GUSHING IN THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE BOAT'S BOTTOM!
THE BOAT IS SINKING!
WAAHH! WATER!
RENYA TRIED TO COVER THE HOLE BUT...
THWUP!

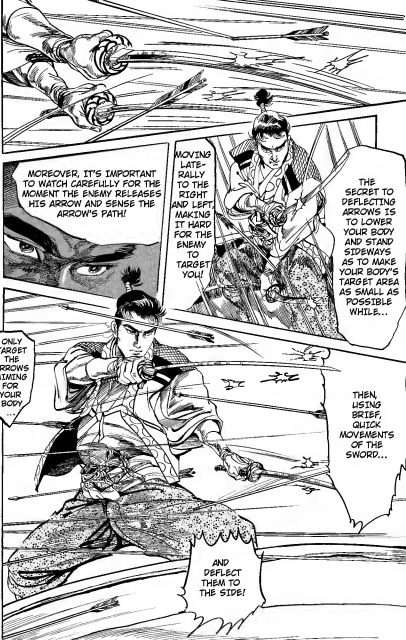

A BOAT APPROACHED FROM BEHIND.
THWUMP!
WAAHH! THERE ARE KILLERS ON THAT BOAT!
I'VE BEEN CARELESS!
THWUP!

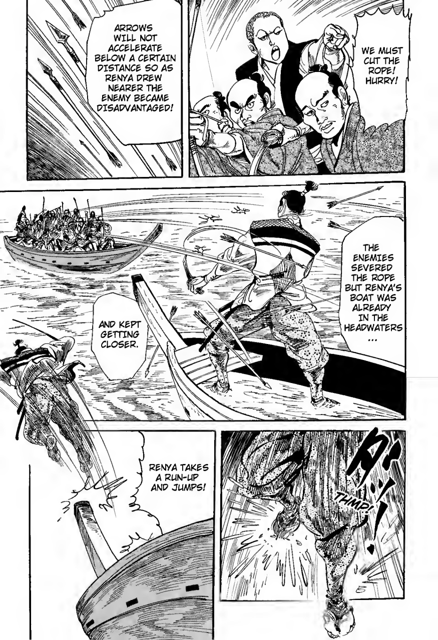

THOSE WHO CAN SWIM, SWIM! RUN AWAY!
UUH-UGH, OYONE ...!!
THWM!
GENPACHI! YOUR SHURIKEN!*
RIGHT AWAY!
FFFYUNN
WHILE COVERING RENYA ...
LISTEN CAREFULLY! NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, DO NOT GET UP!
GENPACHI CONTINUOUSLY THROWS HIS CROSS-SHAPED AND SPIKE SHURIKEN!

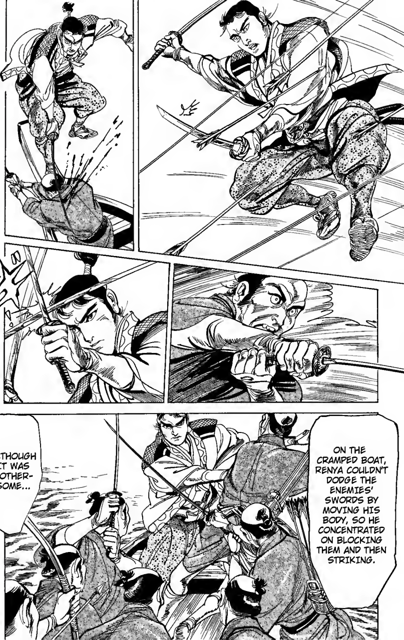
* TRADITIONAL JAPANESE CONCEALED WEAPONS, USUALLY MADE FOR THROWING.

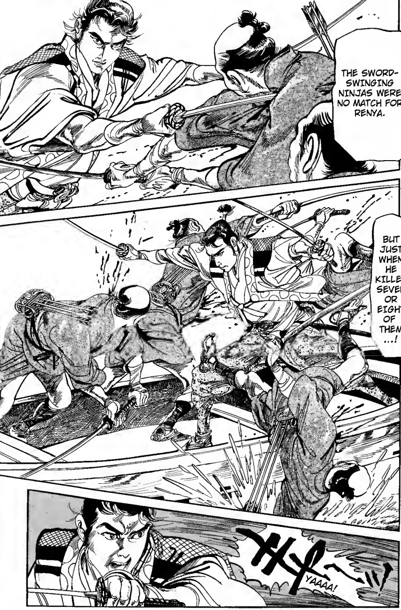

RENYA CUTS OFF A PART OF THE ASSASSIN'S CORPSE, AT THE BASE OF THE THIGH...
AND PUSHES IT INTO THE HOLE, LESSENING THE AMOUNT OF WATER A LITTLE.
THWUP!
AFTER HE RUNS OUT OF SHURIKEN, GENPACHI TAKES AN ARROW TO THE KNEE AND FALLS OVERBOARD!
RENYA ...
PULLS OUT ...
A HOOK AND ROPE FROM GENPACHI'S BOX...
FFFWWWUN!

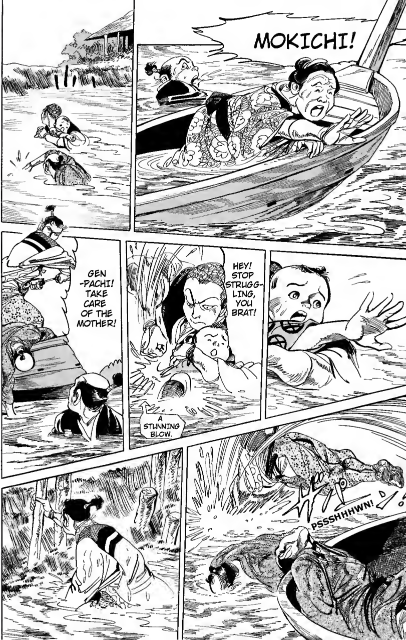

KLANK!
GENPACHI! GRAB THE ROPE AND PULL!
GENPACHI MUSTERS ALL OF HIS STRENGTH TO PULL THE ROPE BACK!
THE BOAT SOARS SMOOTHLY TOWARDS THE DIRECTION OF THE ENEMY VESSEL WHICH HAS BEEN MAINTAINING PROPER DISTANCE FOR THEIR ARCHERS TO ATTACK.

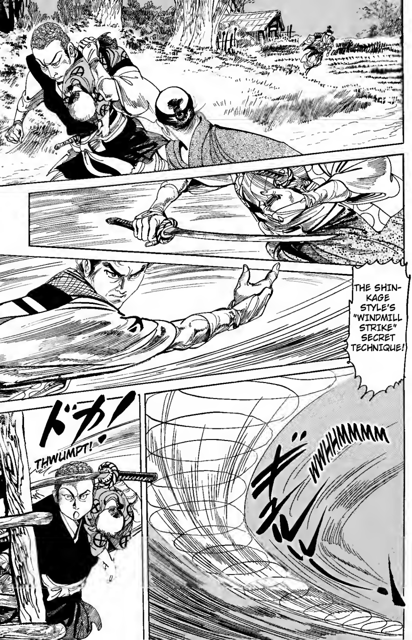

THE SECRET TO DEFLECTING ARROWS IS TO LOWER YOUR BODY AND STAND SIDEWAYS AS TO MAKE YOUR BODY'S TARGET AREA AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE WHILE...
MOVING LATERALLY TO THE RIGHT AND LEFT, MAKING IT HARD FOR THE ENEMY TO TARGET YOU!
MOREOVER, IT'S IMPORTANT TO WATCH CAREFULLY FOR THE MOMENT THE ENEMY RELEASES HIS ARROW AND SENSE THE ARROW'S PATH!
ONLY TARGET THE ARROWS AIMING FOR YOUR BODY...
THEN, USING BRIEF, QUICK MOVEMENTS OF THE SWORD...
AND DEFLECT THEM TO THE SIDE!

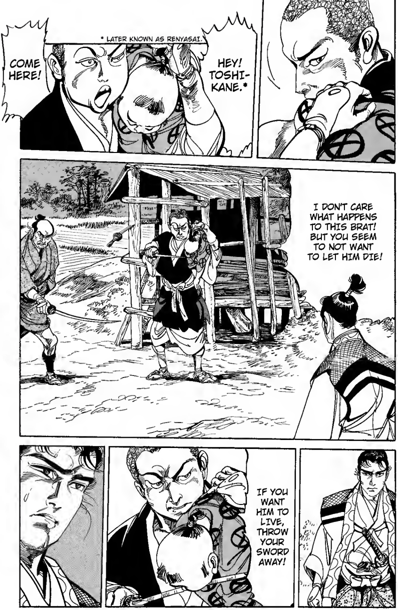

ARROWS WILL NOT ACCELERATE BELOW A CERTAIN DISTANCE SO AS RENYA DREW NEARER THE ENEMY BECAME DISADVANTAGED!
WE MUST CUT THE ROPE! HURRY!
THE ENEMIES SEVERED THE ROPE BUT RENYA'S BOAT WAS ALREADY IN THE HEADWATERS …
AND KEPT GETTING CLOSER.
RENYA TAKES A RUN-UP AND JUMPS!
THMP!


KLING!
ON THE CRAMPED BOAT, RENYA COULDN'T DODGE THE ENEMIES' SWORDS BY MOVING HIS BODY, SO HE CONCENTRATED ON BLOCKING THEM AND THEN STRIKING.
ALTHOUGH IT WAS BOTHERSOME...

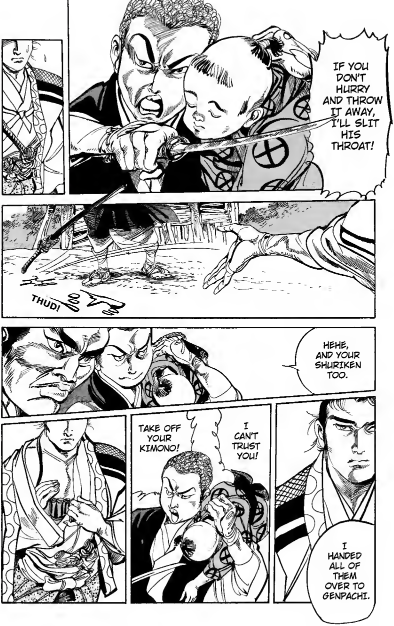

THE SWORD-SWINGING NINJAS WERE NO MATCH FOR RENYA.
BUT JUST WHEN HE KILLED SEVEN OR EIGHT OF THEM ...!
YAAAA!

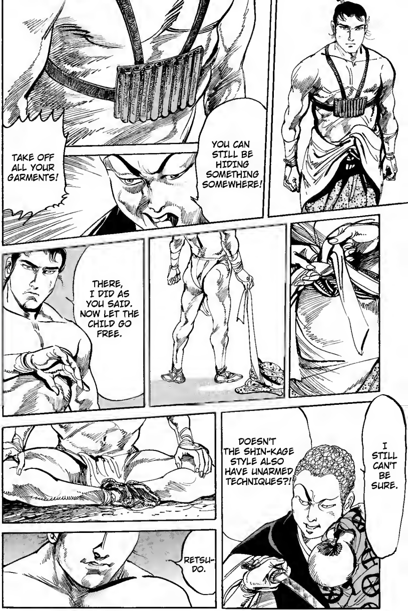

MOKICHI!
GEN-PACHI! TAKE CARE OF THE MOTHER!
HEY! STOP STRUGGLING, YOU BRAT!
A STUNNING BLOW.
PSSSHHHWN!

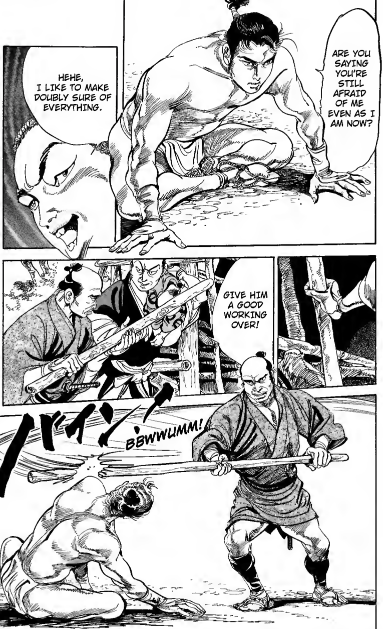

THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "WINDMILL STRIKE" SECRET TECHNIQUE!
ギュン
WWHHMMMMM
ドカ!
THWUMPT!

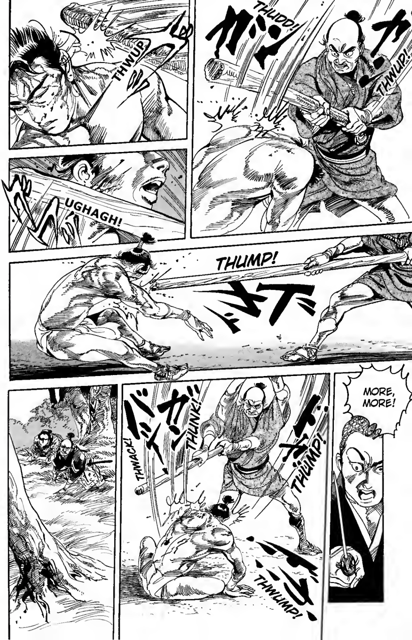

HEY! TOSHIKANE.*
COME HERE!
I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS BRAT! BUT YOU SEEM TO NOT WANT TO LET HIM DIE!
IF YOU WANT HIM TO LIVE, THROW YOUR SWORD AWAY!

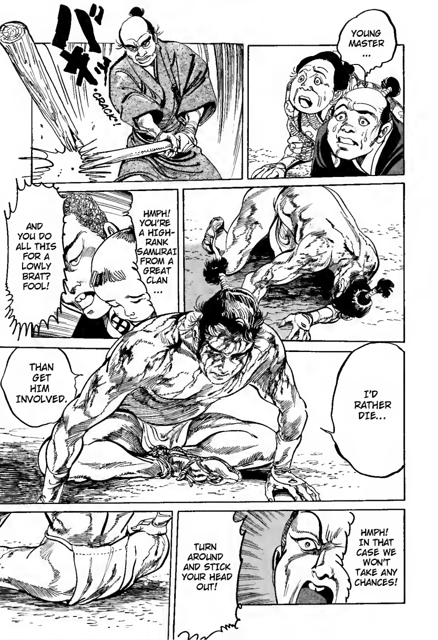
* LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI.

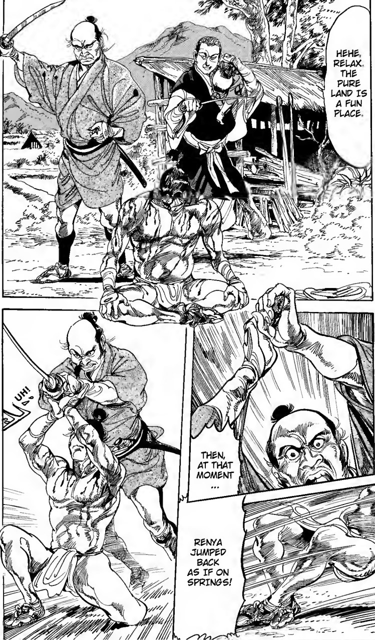

IF YOU DON'T HURRY AND THROW IT AWAY, I'LL SLIT HIS THROAT!
THUD!
HEHE, AND YOUR SHURIKEN TOO.
I HANDED ALL OF THEM OVER TO GENPACHI.
I CAN'T TRUST YOU!
TAKE OFF YOUR KIMONO!

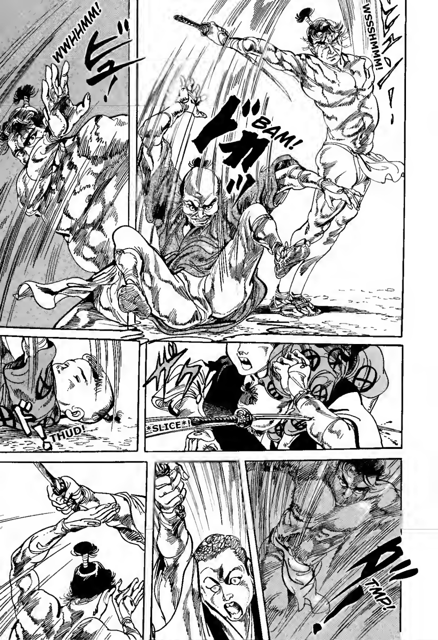

YOU CAN STILL BE HIDING SOMETHING SOMEWHERE!
TAKE OFF ALL YOUR GARMENTS!
THERE, I DID AS YOU SAID. NOW LET THE CHILD GO FREE.
I STILL CAN'T BE SURE.
DOESN'T THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE ALSO HAVE UNARMED TECHNIQUES?!
RETSUDO.

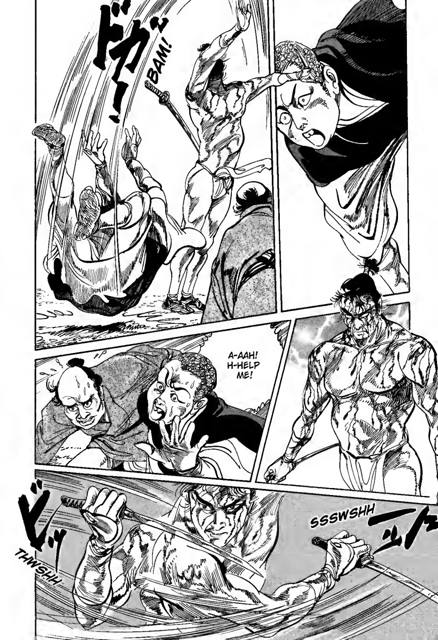

ARE YOU SAYING YOU'RE STILL AFRAID OF ME EVEN AS I AM NOW?
HEHE, I LIKE TO MAKE DOUBLY SURE OF EVERYTHING.
GIVE HIM A GOOD WORKING OVER!
バイン
BBWWUMM!

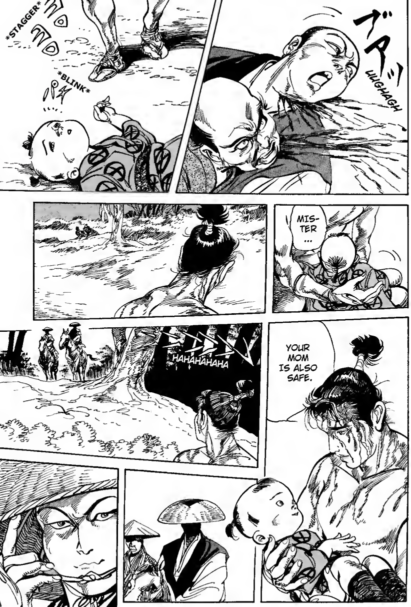

THUDD!
THWUP!
THWUP
UGHAGH!
THUMP!
MORE, MORE!
THUMP!
THUNK!
THWACK!
THWUMP!

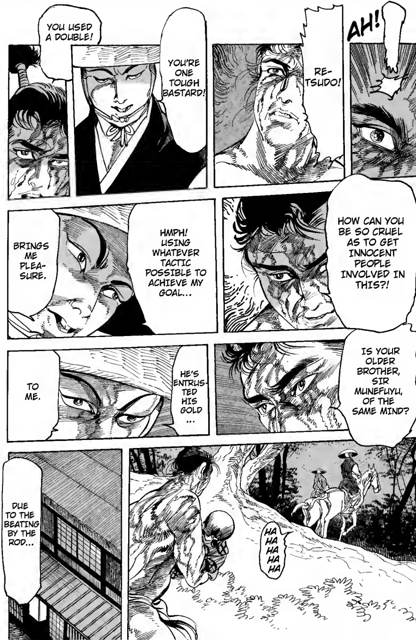

バキッ
CRACK!
YOUNG MASTER...
HMPH! YOU'RE A HIGH-RANK SAMURAI FROM A GREAT CLAN...
AND YOU DO ALL THIS FOR A LOWLY BRAT? FOOL!
I'D RATHER DIE...
THAN GET HIM INVOLVED.
HMPH! IN THAT CASE WE WON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES!
TURN AROUND AND STICK YOUR HEAD OUT!

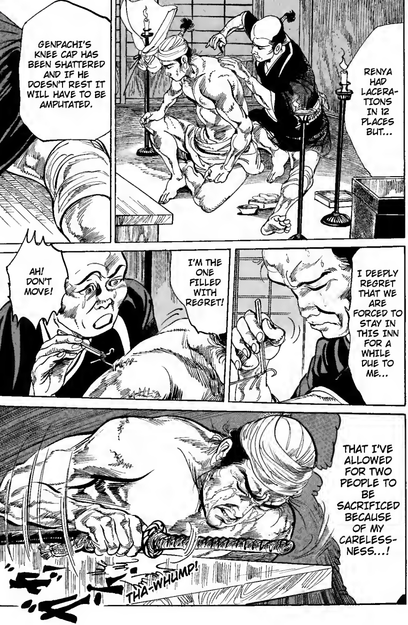

HEHE, RELAX. THE PURE LAND IS A FUN PLACE.
THEN, AT THAT MOMENT ...
UH!
RENYA JUMPED BACK AS IF ON SPRINGS!

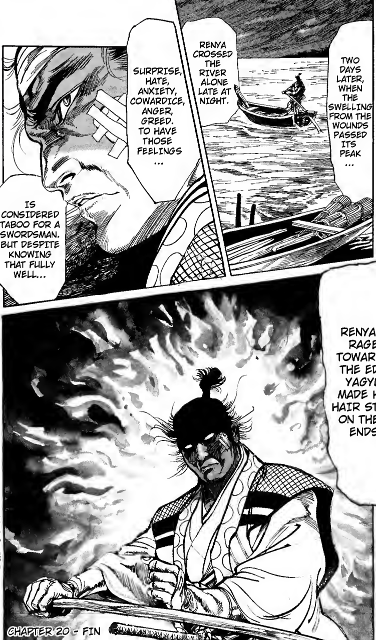

WSSSHMMM!
ズバッ!
WWHHMM!
ビュ!
BAM!
ドガッ
SLICE!
ザク
THUD!
TMP!
ダッ!!


ドカー！
BAM!
A-AAH! H-HELP ME!
ーッ
SSSWSHH
ドッ
THWSHH


ブアッ
UUGHAGH
STAGGER
ヨロヨロ
BLINK
パチ
MISTER ...
YOUR MOM IS ALSO SAFE.
HAHAHAHAHA


AH!
RE-TSUDO!
YOU'RE ONE TOUGH BASTARD!
YOU USED A DOUBLE!
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CRUEL AS TO GET INNOCENT PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS?!
HMPH! USING WHATEVER TACTIC POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE MY GOAL...
BRINGS ME PLEASURE.
IS YOUR OLDER BROTHER, SIR MUNEFUYU, OF THE SAME MIND?
HE'S ENTRUSTED HIS GOLD...
TO ME.
HA HA HA HA HA
DUE TO THE BEATING BY THE ROD...


RENYA HAD LACERATIONS IN 12 PLACES BUT...
GENPACHI'S KNEE CAP HAS BEEN SHATTERED AND IF HE DOESN'T REST IT WILL HAVE TO BE AMPUTATED.
I DEEPLY REGRET THAT WE ARE FORCED TO STAY IN THIS INN FOR A WHILE DUE TO ME...
I'M THE ONE FILLED WITH REGRET!
AH! DON'T MOVE!
THAT I'VE ALLOWED FOR TWO PEOPLE TO BE SACRIFICED BECAUSE OF MY CARELESSNESS...!
THA-WHUMP!


TWO DAYS LATER, WHEN THE SWELLING FROM THE WOUNDS PASSED ITS PEAK ...
RENYA CROSSED THE RIVER ALONE LATE AT NIGHT.
SURPRISE, HATE, ANXIETY, COWARDICE, ANGER, GREED. TO HAVE THOSE FEELINGS ...
IS CONSIDERED TABOO FOR A SWORDSMAN. BUT DESPITE KNOWING THAT FULLY WELL...
RENYA'S RAGE TOWARDS THE EDO YAGYU MADE HIS HAIR STAND ON THEIR ENDS.

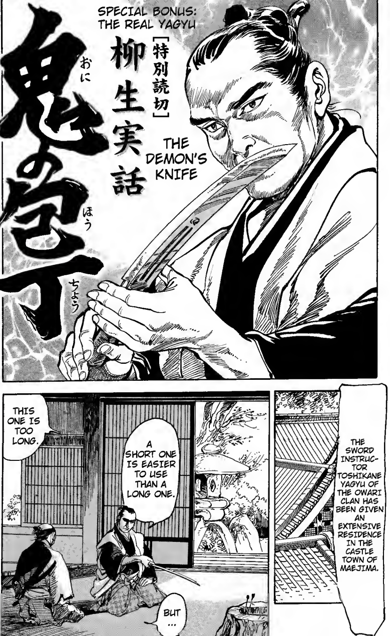
●[第二十話] 完●

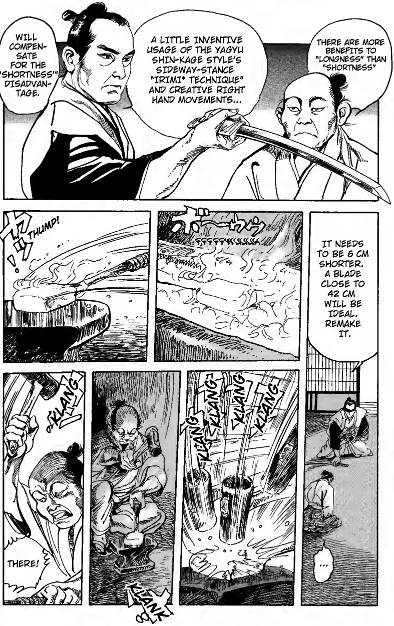
CHAPTER 20 - FIN

YAGYU RENYA, LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

柳生連也武芸帖

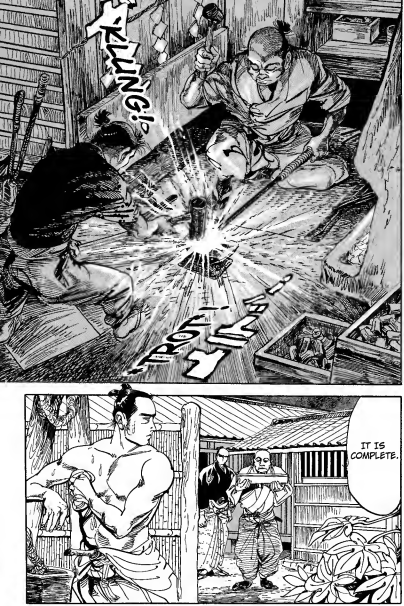
yagyu-renya
bugeicho

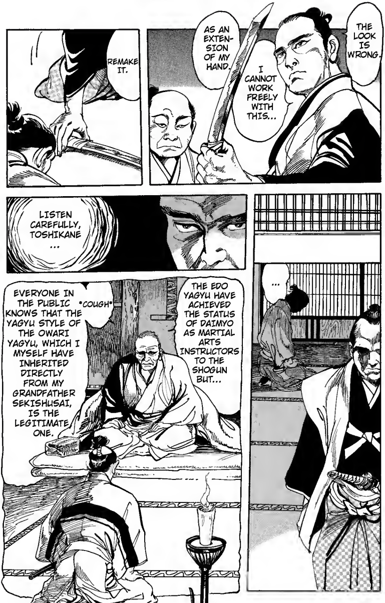

SPECIAL BONUS: THE REAL YAGYU
【特別読切】
柳生実話
鬼の包丁
おに
ほう
ちょう
THE DEMON'S KNIFE
THE SWORD INSTRUCTOR TOSHIKANE YAGYU OF THE OWARI CLAN HAS BEEN GIVEN AN EXTENSIVE RESIDENCE IN THE CASTLE TOWN OF MAEJIMA.
THIS ONE IS TOO LONG.
A SHORT ONE IS EASIER TO USE THAN A LONG ONE.
BUT ...

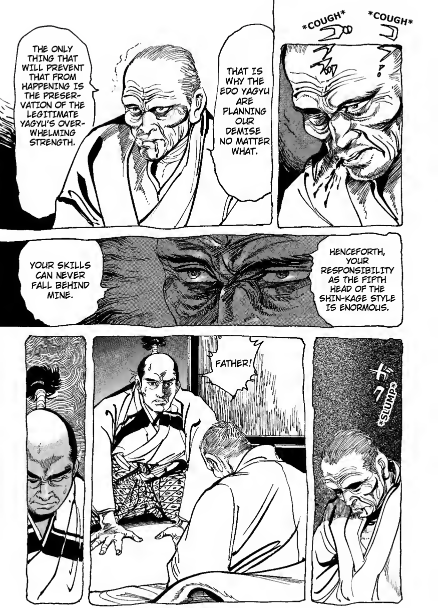

THERE ARE MORE BENEFITS TO "LONGNESS" THAN "SHORTNESS"
A LITTLE INVENTIVE USAGE OF THE YAGYU SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S SIDEWAY-STANCE "IRIMI* TECHNIQUE" AND CREATIVE RIGHT HAND MOVEMENTS...
WILL COMPENSATE FOR THE "SHORTNESS" DISADVANTAGE.
THUMP!
ボ～ウウ
FFFFFFWUUUUH
IT NEEDS TO BE 6 CM SHORTER. A BLADE CLOSE TO 42 CM WILL BE IDEAL. REMAKE IT.
...
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
THERE!
KLANK

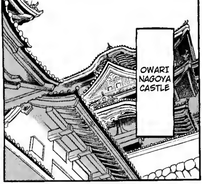
---

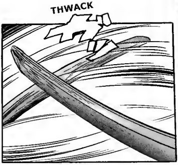
* THE TECHNIQUE OF CLOSING THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR OPPONENT BY MOVING TO THE SIDES AND AVOIDING A FRONTAL ATTACK.

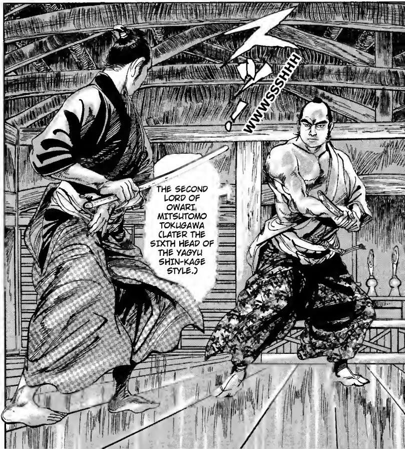

KLUNG!!
TROT--
IT IS COMPLETE.

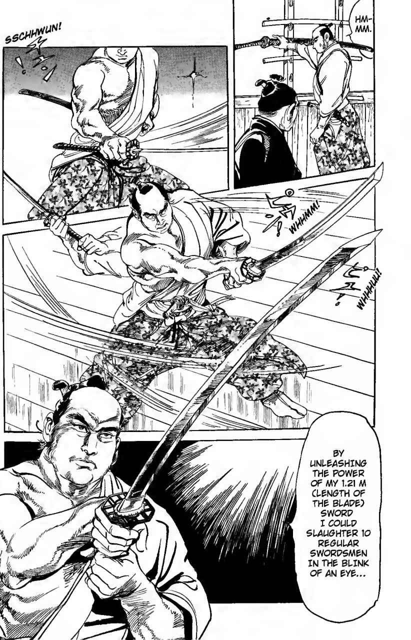

THE LOOK IS WRONG.
I CANNOT WORK FREELY WITH THIS...
AS AN EXTENSION OF MY HAND.
REMAKE IT.
...
LISTEN CAREFULLY, TOSHIKANE ...
THE EDO YAGYU HAVE ACHIEVED THE STATUS OF DAIMYO AS MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTORS TO THE SHOGUN BUT...
COUGH
EVERYONE IN THE PUBLIC KNOWS THAT THE YAGYU STYLE OF THE OWARI YAGYU, WHICH I MYSELF HAVE INHERITED DIRECTLY FROM MY GRANDFATHER SEKISHUSAI, IS THE LEGITIMATE ONE.

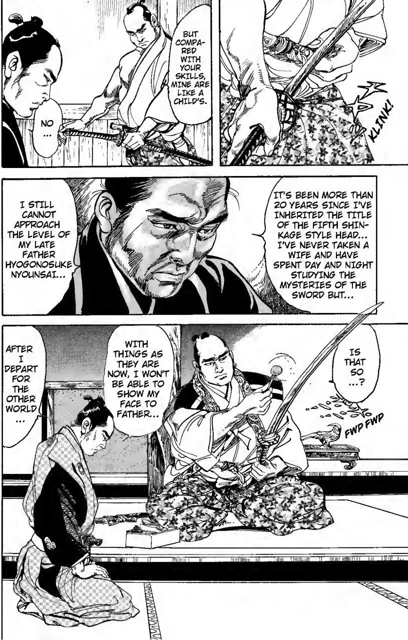

THE ONLY THING THAT WILL PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING IS THE PRESERVATION OF THE LEGITIMATE YAGYU'S OVERWHELMING STRENGTH.
THAT IS WHY THE EDO YAGYU ARE PLANNING OUR DEMISE NO MATTER WHAT.
COUGH
COUGH
YOUR SKILLS CAN NEVER FALL BEHIND MINE.
HENCEFORTH, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS THE FIFTH HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE IS ENORMOUS.
FATHER!
SLUMP

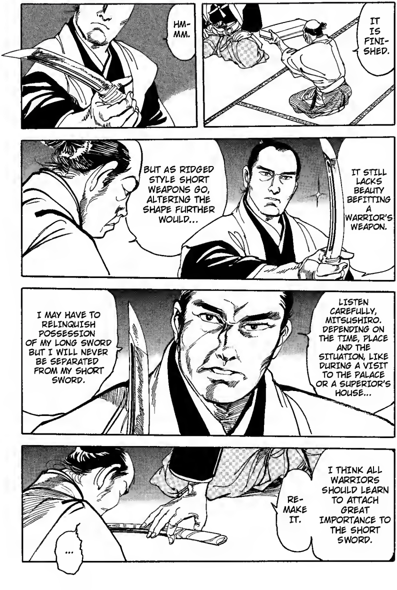

OWARI NAGOYA CASTLE

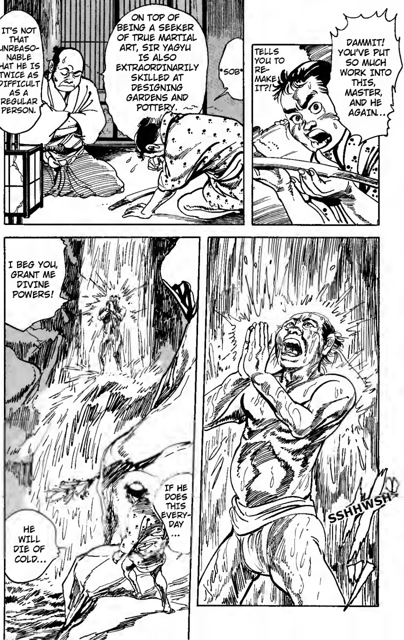

THWACK

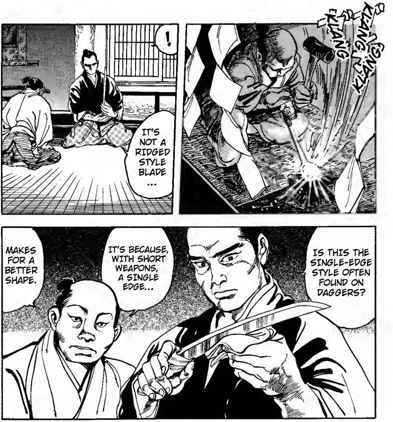

WWWSSSHHH
THE SECOND LORD OF OWARI, MITSUTOMO TOKUGAWA (LATER THE SIXTH HEAD OF THE YAGYU SHIN-KAGE STYLE.)

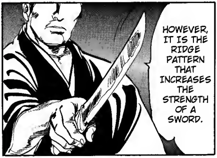

HM-MM.
SSCHHWUN!
WHHMM!
WHHUUU!
BY UNLEASHING THE POWER OF MY 1.21 M (LENGTH OF THE BLADE) SWORD I COULD SLAUGHTER 10 REGULAR SWORDSMEN IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...


NO ...
BUT COMPARED WITH YOUR SKILLS, MINE ARE LIKE A CHILD'S.
KLINK!
I STILL CANNOT APPROACH THE LEVEL OF MY LATE FATHER HYOGONOSUKE NYOUNSAI...
IT'S BEEN MORE THAN 20 YEARS SINCE I'VE INHERITED THE TITLE OF THE FIFTH SHINKAGE STYLE HEAD... I'VE NEVER TAKEN A WIFE AND HAVE SPENT DAY AND NIGHT STUDYING THE MYSTERIES OF THE SWORD BUT...
AFTER I DEPART FOR THE OTHER WORLD ...
WITH THINGS AS THEY ARE NOW, I WON'T BE ABLE TO SHOW MY FACE TO FATHER...
IS THAT SO ...?
FWP FWP

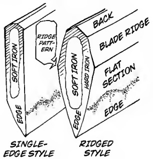

IT IS FINISHED.
HM-MM.
IT STILL LACKS BEAUTY BEFITTING A WARRIOR'S WEAPON.
BUT AS RIDGED STYLE SHORT WEAPONS GO, ALTERING THE SHAPE FURTHER WOULD...
LISTEN CAREFULLY, MITSUSHIRO. DEPENDING ON THE TIME, PLACE AND THE SITUATION, LIKE DURING A VISIT TO THE PALACE OR A SUPERIOR'S HOUSE...
I MAY HAVE TO RELINQUISH POSSESSION OF MY LONG SWORD BUT I WILL NEVER BE SEPARATED FROM MY SHORT SWORD.
I THINK ALL WARRIORS SHOULD LEARN TO ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE SHORT SWORD.
RE-MAKE IT.
...

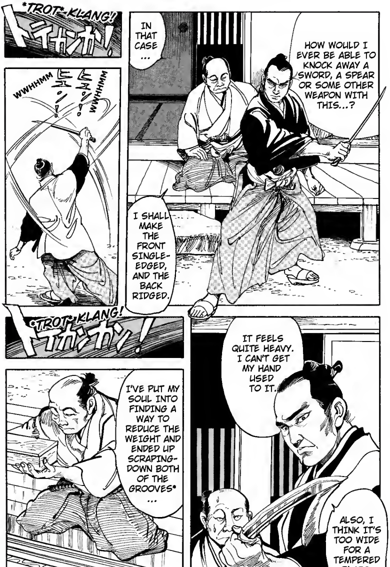

DAMMIT! YOU'VE PUT SO MUCH WORK INTO THIS, MASTER, AND HE AGAIN...
TELLS YOU TO RE-MAKE IT?!
SOB
ON TOP OF BEING A SEEKER OF TRUE MARTIAL ART, SIR YAGYU IS ALSO EXTRAORDINARILY SKILLED AT DESIGNING GARDENS AND POTTERY.
IT'S NOT THAT UNREASONABLE THAT HE IS TWICE AS DIFFICULT AS A REGULAR PERSON.
SSHHWSH
I BEG YOU, GRANT ME DIVINE POWERS!
IF HE DOES THIS EVERYDAY...
HE WILL DIE OF COLD...


KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
!
IT'S NOT A RIDGED STYLE BLADE ...
IS THIS THE SINGLE-EDGE STYLE OFTEN FOUND ON DAGGERS?
IT'S BECAUSE, WITH SHORT WEAPONS, A SINGLE EDGE...
MAKES FOR A BETTER SHAPE.

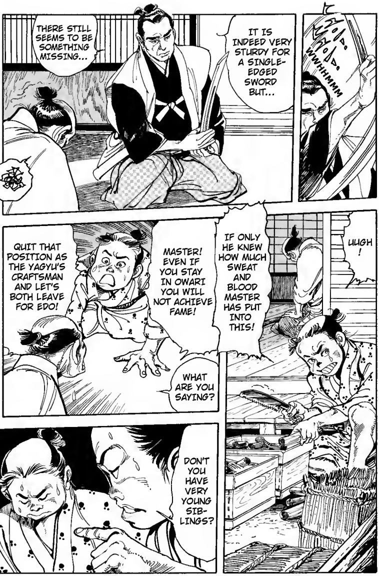

HOWEVER, IT IS THE RIDGE PATTERN THAT INCREASES THE STRENGTH OF A SWORD.

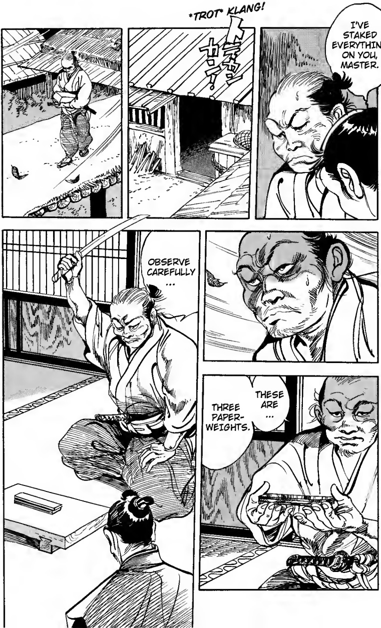
BLADE CROSS SECTION

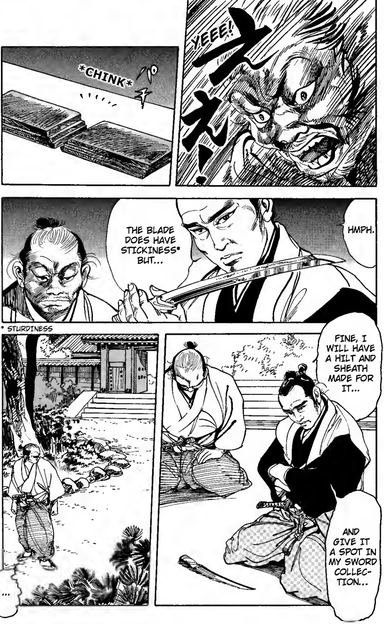

BACK
BLADE RIDGE
RIDGE PATTERN
SOFT IRON
HARD IRON
FLAT SECTION
EDGE
SINGLE-EDGE STYLE
RIDGED STYLE


TROT-KLANG!
トィカンカ!
WWHHMM ヒュン!
WWHHMM ヒュン!
IN THAT CASE ...
HOW WOULD I EVER BE ABLE TO KNOCK AWAY A SWORD, A SPEAR OR SOME OTHER WEAPON WITH THIS...?
I SHALL MAKE THE FRONT SINGLE-EDGED, AND THE BACK RIDGED.
TROT-KLANG!
トィカンカン!
I'VE PUT MY SOUL INTO FINDING A WAY TO REDUCE THE WEIGHT AND ENDED UP SCRAPING-DOWN BOTH OF THE GROOVES* ...
IT FEELS QUITE HEAVY. I CAN'T GET MY HAND USED TO IT.
ALSO, I THINK IT'S TOO WIDE FOR A TEMPERED BLADE.

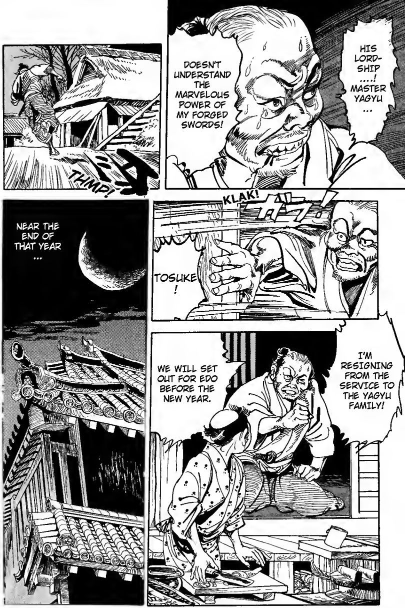
* GROOVES ALONG THE LENGTH OF A SWORD'S BLADE ARE USED TO REDUCE ITS WEIGHT.

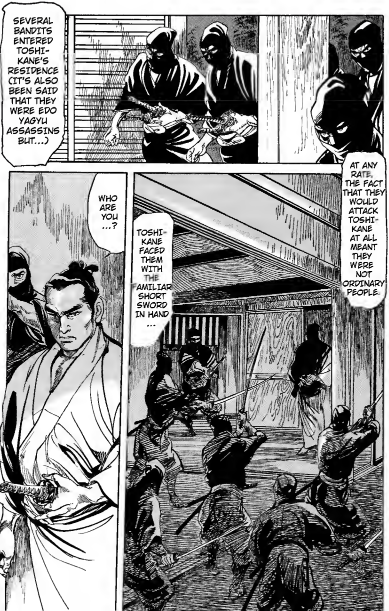

WWHHMMM
IT IS INDEED VERY STURDY FOR A SINGLE-EDGED SWORD BUT...
THERE STILL SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING MISSING...
UUGH!
IF ONLY HE KNEW HOW MUCH SWEAT AND BLOOD MASTER HAS PUT INTO THIS!
MASTER! EVEN IF YOU STAY IN OWARI YOU WILL NOT ACHIEVE FAME!
QUIT THAT POSITION AS THE YAGYU'S CRAFTSMAN AND LET'S BOTH LEAVE FOR EDO!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
DON'T YOU HAVE VERY YOUNG SIBLINGS?

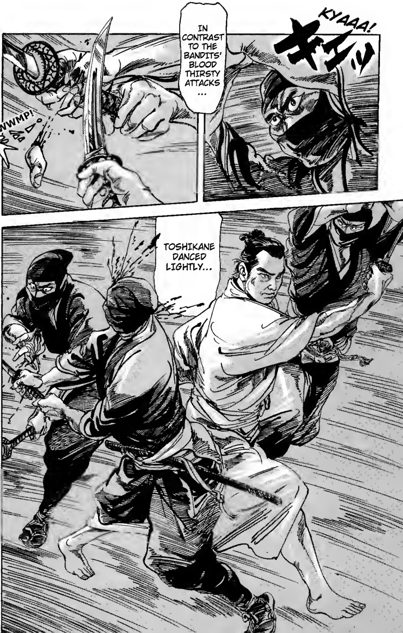

TROT KLANG!
トテッ カーン！
I'VE STAKED EVERYTHING ON YOU, MASTER.
OBSERVE CAREFULLY ...
THESE ARE ...
THREE PAPER-WEIGHTS.

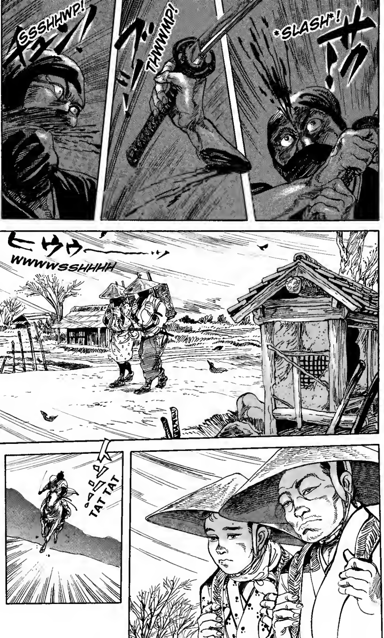

YEEE!
CHINK
HMPH.
THE BLADE DOES HAVE STICKINESS* BUT...
FINE, I WILL HAVE A HILT AND SHEATH MADE FOR IT...
AND GIVE IT A SPOT IN MY SWORD COLLECTION...
...

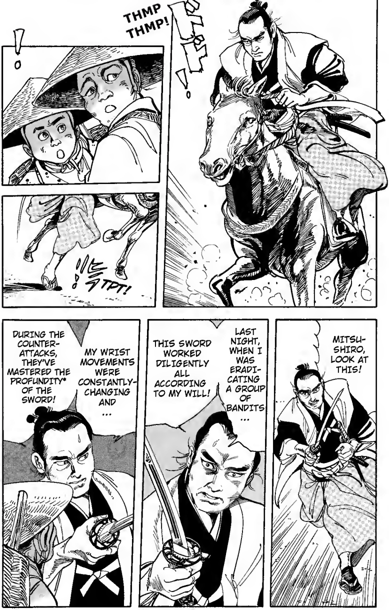
* STURDINESS


THMP!
HIS LORDSHIP ....! MASTER YAGYU ...
DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE MARVELOUS POWER OF MY FORGED SWORDS!
NEAR THE END OF THAT YEAR ...
KLAK!
TOSUKE!
I'M RESIGNING FROM THE SERVICE TO THE YAGYU FAMILY!
WE WILL SET OUT FOR EDO BEFORE THE NEW YEAR.

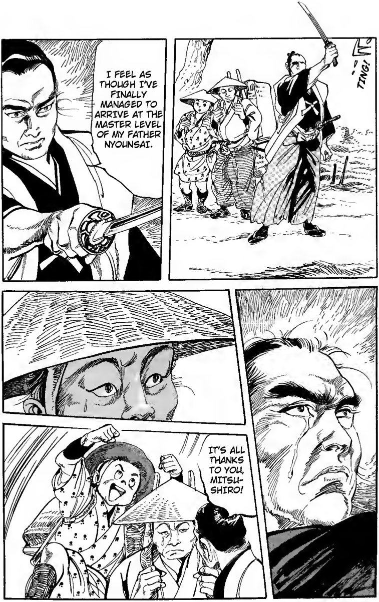

SEVERAL BANDITS ENTERED TOSHIKANE'S RESIDENCE (IT'S ALSO BEEN SAID THAT THEY WERE EDO YAGYU ASSASSINS BUT...)
AT ANY RATE, THE FACT THAT THEY WOULD ATTACK TOSHIKANE AT ALL MEANT THEY WERE NOT ORDINARY PEOPLE.
TOSHIKANE FACED THEM WITH THE FAMILIAR SHORT SWORD IN HAND...
WHO ARE YOU...?

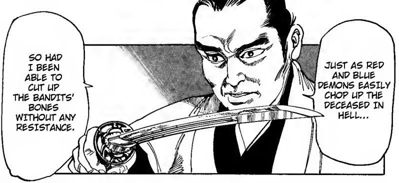

IN CONTRAST TO THE BANDITS' BLOOD THIRSTY ATTACKS ...
KYAAA!
キエッ
FWWMP!
TOSHIKANE DANCED LIGHTLY...

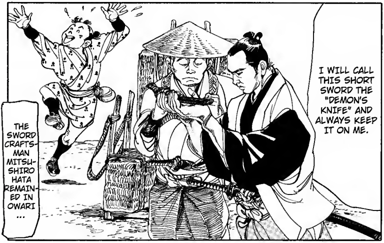

SLASH!
ザク!
THWWMP!
ブン!
SSSHHWP!
キュン!
ヒュウ〜〜ッ
WWWWSSHHHH
TAT TAT


THMP THMP!
!
!
!?
TPT!
MITSU-SHIRO, LOOK AT THIS!
LAST NIGHT, WHEN I WAS ERADICATING A GROUP OF BANDITS...
THIS SWORD WORKED DILIGENTLY ALL ACCORDING TO MY WILL!
MY WRIST MOVEMENTS WERE CONSTANTLY-CHANGING AND ...
DURING THE COUNTER-ATTACKS, THEY'VE MASTERED THE PROFUNDITY* OF THE SWORD!

* PROFUNDITY = SECRETS.


I FEEL AS THOUGH I'VE FINALLY MANAGED TO ARRIVE AT THE MASTER LEVEL OF MY FATHER NYOUNSAI.
TING!
IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, MITSUSHIRO!


JUST AS RED AND BLUE DEMONS EASILY CHOP UP THE DECEASED IN HELL...
SO HAD I BEEN ABLE TO CUT UP THE BANDITS' BONES WITHOUT ANY RESISTANCE.

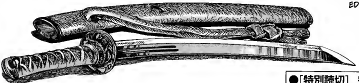

I WILL CALL THIS SHORT SWORD THE "DEMON'S KNIFE" AND ALWAYS KEEP IT ON ME.
THE SWORD CRAFTSMAN MITSUSHIRO HATA REMAINED IN OWARI...

AND FORGED MANY SWORDS FOR THE OWARI CLAN RETAINERS, WITH HIS FAME EVEN REACHING EDO.

TOSHIKANE LATER BECAME A MONK AND ASSUMED THE NAME RENYASAI.

IN ADDITION, THE "DEVIL'S KNIFE" HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH HISTORY AS OWARI'S PRICELESS TREASURE...

AND IS CELEBRATED EVEN TODAY AS A BEAUTIFUL AND PERFECT FAMED SWORD.



●[特別読切] 完●

"SPECIAL BONUS" – FIN

SP COMICS

YAGYU RENYA, LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER VOLUME 3

柳生連也武芸帖 3

JULY 25TH 2002 – FIRST EDITION

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